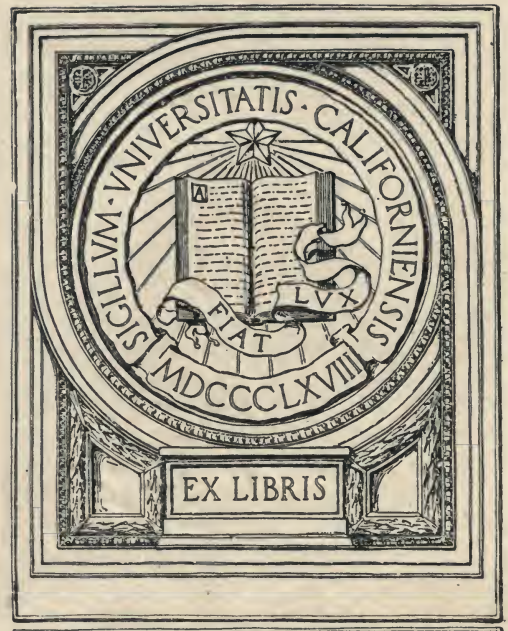
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MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

MRS. FRANCES SHERIDAN.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY COX AND BAYLIS, GREAT QUEEN STREET.

Mrs. Frances Sheridan.

Author of Sydney Biddulp, Nourjahad, The Discovery &c.

AND

Mother of the late Rt. Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Published by G. & W. Whitaker, March. 1824.

MEMOIRS

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LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

MRS. FRANCES SHERIDAN,

MOTHER OF THE LATE

RIGHT HON. RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

AND AUTHOR OF

"SIDNEY BIDDULPH," "NOURJAHAD," AND "THE DISCOVERY."

WITH

REMARKS UPON A LATE LIFE OF

THE RIGHT HON. R. B. SHERIDAN;

ALSO

CRITICISMS AND SELECTIONS

FROM THE WORKS OF MRS. SHERIDAN;

AND

BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES OF HER FAMILY AND CONTEMPORARIES.

With a Portrait.

BY HER GRAND-DAUGHTER,

ALICIA LEFANU.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER,

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1824.

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PREFACE.

THE Author of these Memoirs was encouraged to the undertaking, by the advice and assistance of several intelligent friends; and, principally, by the approbation of the Rev. DR. SAMUEL PARR: whose regard for the virtues, and admiration of the talents of Mrs. Frances Sheridan, induced him kindly to extend to the Author the great advantage of his valuable observations and corrections, during the progress of the work.

An account of the life of Mrs. Frances Sheridan would be incomplete, without some particulars relating to her family. The passages that place the conduct of the late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley

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Sheridan in a new and interesting point of view, are drawn from the letters of a lady of the most distinguished respectability; and whose judgment of his character was formed upon the basis of a long intimacy and friendship.

All the other anecdotes are derived from the Author's mother, Mrs. H. Lefanu, only surviving daughter of Thomas Sheridan, M.A., and of Mrs. Frances Sheridan, and sister of the late Right Honourable R. B. Sheridan.

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MEMOIRS

OF

MRS. FRANCES SHERIDAN.

CHAPTER I.

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The life of Mrs. Frances Sheridan is in various respects more interesting than that of most literary women.

As excelling in different modes of composition, each of which is supposed to require a

peculiar talent; as uniting to uncommon powers of conversation, every domestic virtue that most endears and distinguishes a woman; and as the mother of a man confessedly pre-eminent in dramatic wit and parliamentary eloquence; she certainly deserves some memorial, fuller and more distinct than those brief or erroneous biographical notices, which alone have as yet appeared before the public.

Frances Chamberlaine was born A.D. 1724. Her family was of English extraction, her grandfather, Sir Oliver Chamberlaine, being an English Baronet. Her father, Dr. Philip Chamberlaine, was Prebend of Rathmichael, Diocese of Dublin,* Archdeacon of Glendalough, and Rector of St. Nicholas Without.†

Dr. Chamberlaine married Miss Whyte, an English lady, who had three brothers: Captain Whyte, R.N., Colonel Whyte, and Solomon Whyte, Deputy Governor of the Tower. By this marriage Dr. Chamberlaine had five children. Walter, the eldest, was in the church,

* Collated in 1713. † In Dublin.

and died unmarried and rather young; the second son, Richard, was educated for a surgeon, and was entered on board a man of war in that capacity; Richard Chamberlaine married the daughter of his commander, Captain Pattison. By his marriage with this lady, who was related to Lord Hardwicke, he had no children.

On the death of Solomon Whyte, Esq., his maternal uncle, Richard Chamberlaine, inherited a considerable estate in the county of Longford, in Ireland; and dying without children, this estate finally devolved upon his eldest nephew, Charles Francis Sheridan, as heir at law.

William, the third son of Dr. Philip Chamberlaine, was of the profession of the law, and died a judge in Jamaica. He married a lady of the name of Smyth, by whom he had three sons; and one daughter, who is still living.

The two daughters of Dr. Chamberlaine were, Anne, married to the Reverend John Fish, A.M., a clergyman of a highly respectable

family in the county of Kildare; and Frances, afterwards Mrs. Sheridan, the subject of these Memoirs.

Her mother dying soon after her birth, Miss Chamberlaine from her earliest years, had to contend with disadvantages of education, which in a less ardent mind would have crushed every germ of literary talent.

Dr. Chamberlaine was an admired preacher, and strict in the performance of all his clerical duties. He was, at the same time, a great humourist, the strongest proof of which is, that he was with difficulty prevailed on to allow his daughter to learn to read; and to write, he affirmed to be perfectly superfluous in the education of a female. The Doctor considered the possession of this art, as tending to nothing but the multiplication of love-letters, or the scarcely less dangerous interchange of sentiment in the confidential effusions of female correspondence.

Happily for Miss Chamberlaine, she was blest with affectionate brothers, who vied with

each other in averting the effects of her father's injudicious prohibitions. By her eldest brother, Walter, she was privately instructed in writing; and finding in his sister an inquiring mind, which led her to look beyond the usual routine of female education, he proceeded to impart to her a knowledge of the Latin language: a circumstance which she has pleasingly commemorated in the instructions given to his sister by Sir George, in her novel of "Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph."

By her brother Richard she was initiated into the science of botany: an acquisition which she chiefly confined to the purpose of benefiting the poor of her father's parish, to whose distresses and wants she liberally administered relief; and prescribed for them in such cases as did not go beyond her limited skill. She at the same time evinced an enlightened and truly Christian zeal for their spiritual welfare; of which *one* anecdote will furnish a sufficient proof.

There was, among Dr. Chamberlaine's parishioners, a poor creature who had been given

up by his parents as a born idiot, and incapable of any instruction whatsoever. Frances, or "Miss Fanny," as the Rector's youngest daughter was usually styled, thought that, by care and judicious treatment, a ray of light might be communicated to the mind of this unfortunate being: and, influenced by that patient and extensive charity which "hopeth all things," she undertook, herself, the task of his tuition.

She succeeded in teaching him to read, and to repeat the Creed and Lord's Prayer: but, just as she flattered herself with having communicated to his benighted mind a dawn of intellectual light, a strange and ludicrous question, put by him on a mysterious point of religion, showed that he was utterly deficient in comprehension of what he had thus acquired by rote, and drew on Miss Chamberlaine much good-natured raillery from her brothers respecting the "surprising proficiency of her pupil." Not discouraged by this, she continued her instructions; and, by patience and perseverance,

had, at length, the satisfaction of seeing the moral state of the unfortunate outcast in whom she had interested herself considerably ameliorated; of seeing him sensible of her kindness, and taking his place regularly every Sunday at church, in somewhat of the restored dignity of a rational being.

At the early age of fifteen, her talent for literary composition evinced itself. Notwithstanding his aversion to writing, and writing ladies, Dr. Chamberlaine could not refuse his housekeeper paper to keep the house accounts, and a portion of this paper (ill-coloured and coarse, it is true) Miss Fanny thought it no robbery to appropriate to the far nobler purpose of writing a romance, in two volumes, entitled "Eugenia and Adelaide." This novel, which remained in MS. till published (after her decease, and without the author's name) by Dilly, displays unquestionable proofs of a fertile imagination and inventive skill; indeed, the whole style and story may be said to breathe the freshness of fifteen—the happy period at which the

novel was written. The plot, as the name imports, is a double one, containing two complete stories, each in its way interesting and attractive. That of Eugenia is full of Spanish imbroglio, and highly susceptible of comic heightening. It was, in fact, at a subsequent period, adapted for the stage in the form of a comic drama, by the author's eldest daughter, Mrs. Lefanu, of Dublin; and was represented with success at the theatre of that metropolis.

If the story of Eugenia is more animated and sprightly, that of Adelaide is more tender and pathetic. It possesses a deeper and more powerful interest, and is wound up with a degree of skill truly surprising in so young a writer. The episodical characters introduced evince still further the invention and resources she already possessed; and some allusions to the historical events of the period with which she has connected her narrative, bear witness alike to the extent of her reading, and the accuracy of her discrimination. Dr. Chamberlaine's prejudices against female authorship continuing in

full force, this first literary sin was, of course, kept a profound secret from him. But, having succeeded, we may suppose, to her own satisfaction, in the composition of a romance, the ambition of our young authoress took a bolder flight, and, having a father and brother both in the church, the spirit of imitation impelled her next to try her powers in writing a sermon. In this attempt (so different from the preceding) she was also successful, and was induced, in consequence of this confirmed confidence in herself, to compose another.

Neither of these manuscript sermons have I been able to procure; but they were long in the possession of the family, and were reckoned to display considerable ability.

Except the novel and the two sermons, I know of no literary productions of Mrs. Sheridan from her fifteenth to her one-and-twentieth year, between which time I venture to place them, not having the means of fixing the date more accurately. It was about that time Miss Chamberlaine resumed her pen in a very dif-

ferent manner, and with very different intentions.

Her father having, some time previous to his decease, sunk into a state of mental imbecility, those hours that she could spare from necessary attention to him, were much more at Miss Chamberlaine's disposal than formerly. She now sometimes ventured with her brothers to a play, an amusement which she had never before had the opportunity of enjoying: Dr. Chamberlaine's objections to the drama being equal to his prejudices against female literature.

The impressions, therefore, which the novelty of the scene made on Miss Chamberlaine's heart and mind, were proportionably vivid; and it was upon one of these public occasions that she first saw Mr. Sheridan, who, in conjunction with Garrick and Barry, furnished at that time to the lovers of the drama an intellectual treat of the highest description.

Mr. Sheridan, who was not above twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, had just entered upon his career of Manager of the Dublin

Theatre, with every advantage and every prepossession in his favour. Born an Irishman, he had at the same time the advantage of receiving his early education at Westminster school, where he was the friend and contemporary of the Rev. Dr. Markham, afterwards Archbishop of York; and it has been remembered by his school-fellows, that they were reckoned the two best scholars of their standing. From this learned seminary he was removed to the University of Dublin, where he was placed under the tuition of Dr. Clarke. His youth was spent as the associate and classfellow of most of the young nobility and gentry of the kingdom. He pursued his academical studies diligently, and took his first degree in the year 1736. In 1758, when his literary character had been established in England, Mr. Sheridan was honoured by the University of Oxford with the degree of Master of Arts; and at Cambridge, March 16, 1759, he obtained the same distinction. He was not a scholar by profession, but his classical attainments were much respected by his learned

friend Dr. Robert Sumner, Master of Harrow School, and by the well-known Dr. Parr.

With such qualifications, it is rather surprising Mr. Sheridan should have made choice of the stage in preference to one of the learned professions. A circumstance (peculiar *at the time* to his father, Dr. Sheridan) might have had some influence in determining his son's inclinations in favour of the Drama. This was, the periodical representation of a Greek play, which it was customary for Dr. Sheridan to have performed by his head class, previous to their entrance into the University. One of these pieces was the Hippolytus of Euripides. At other times the plays of Sophocles were acted. Dr. King, Archbishop of Dublin, was present at the representation of the Hippolytus of Euripides; and on another occasion, the Lord Lieutenant honoured one of these exhibitions with his presence. The knowledge that his father had countenanced such a custom, might have early impressed the mind of Mr. Sheridan with ideas of the antiquity and importance of the stage:

but whatever ground there may be for this conjecture, the fact is certain, that the excellent education Mr. Sheridan had received, the respectability of his connexions, and his amiable private character, gave him an influence, both with the performers and the public, which it would have been impossible for a low-born adventurer in the dramatic line, or a stranger to the country, however great his merit, to have obtained.

In the words of the historian of the stage, Mr. Sheridan "possessed a happy and agreeable manner of address towards those he wished to engage, *which inspired them with a personal love for him.*

"As a performer, the excellence which he had attained at that early age, in a wide range both of comic and tragic characters, seemed to give the most advantageous promise of future perfection in his art.

"In private life, when his labours blessed him with success, his greatest pleasure was in assisting his relatives and distrest friends."

Such is the character given of Mr. Sheridan by a contemporary (Benjamin Victor, who acted under Mr. Sheridan's management as treasurer to the Theatre), a man who from his situation was eminently qualified to judge of his manners and disposition, yet who was so far from being influenced by any personal partiality, that he ingenuously relates many little bickerings and jealousies in which he indulged.*

* In the "Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, by John Watkins, LL.D," page 70, the following very different picture is given of his father.

"Mr. Sheridan was extremely opiniated and obstinate among his associates; *cold, reserved, and dictatorial to his dependants.*"

In opposition to this statement, I am happy to adduce the luminous definition of his mental and moral qualities kindly furnished me by the Rev. Dr. Parr, who had frequent opportunities of observing the real character of Mr. Sheridan's mind.

"Mr. Sheridan never appeared to me opiniated or dictatorial. He was whimsical, but not opiniated; he was animated, but not dictatorial."

So far was he from indulging in the overbearing manners that

The account of Mr. Sheridan's goodness of heart might be also confirmed by the recollec-

that distinguished not only Johnson, but Baretti, and a school of literary men at that period, that though he enjoyed with the most exquisite relish the company of persons of talents and taste, no individual of an opposite description had to fear a mortification in his society; nor, whether he gave his opinion professionally or mingled in general conversation, had female diffidence ever to apprehend a rough reproach or a brutal sally from his lips.

As to the elder Mr. Sheridan's deportment towards his dependants at the theatre, the biographer, who, both for the moral character of the father, and the literary history of the son, seems to have attentively consulted the old newspapers, no doubt took up his ideas from some Dialogues published through that channel, very many years after Mr. Sheridan had given up the management; but while he was still in the highest reputation as an actor whenever he performed in Dublin. These Dialogues, which bore the general title of "A View of Stephen's Green," attacked every remarkable character, and Mr. Sheridan pretty often among the rest. They gave a false, but ludicrous description of his "*pedantic*" deportment among the actors, representing him as addressing them in Latin. They also described him as the tyrant of the green-room, where his nod was watched with trembling reverence, and where, upon his entrance, one actor

hastened

tions of several descendants of those who had experienced it. Relations from whose gratitude and attachment he met with the most pleasing returns.*

hastened to take his hat, another took his stick, another set a chair for him, and so forth.

Mr. Sheridan, who never looked into this contemptible publication, long remained ignorant that he was himself a subject of frequent and unwarrantable attack; and on some one's remarking (perhaps with a malicious intention) in his presence, that these "Dialogues" were really intolerable in their unsparing severity, Mr. Sheridan observed with a *naïveté* that was quite characteristic, "Isn't it very extraordinary that they should never have brought *me* in?"

* This was particularly shown in the instance of his father's sister and her family; reduced to unforeseen distress by a most afflicting accident, that closed in an untimely manner her husband's useful life. Yet in the "Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan," p. 44, it is said, "The widow of the doctor, on his death, removed to Dublin, where she lived in a very retired way many years, and died at an advanced age in mean circumstances."

Is it credible that Mr. Sheridan, who was remarkable for the scrupulous discharge of his relative duties, and who was

With the fair sex Mr. Sheridan was a distinguished favourite, on account of the elegance

was at that very time assisting to the utmost of his power a more distant relation, should leave his own mother to pine in want and obscurity? But the assertion is grounded on a total mistake.

Mr. Sheridan's mother died *before* her husband, the doctor, whose house was kept till the time of his own decease by Miss Elizabeth Sheridan, his eldest daughter. The biographer, probably, confused Mrs. Elizabeth Sheridan, Dr. Sheridan's wife, with Mrs. Eleanor Sheridan, wife to his second son Richard, who *did* survive her husband, and who died at a very advanced age.

Neither should we allow too hasty a credit to the impressions liable to be created by Dean Swift's character of Mrs. Elizabeth Sheridan, and by the name of "Xantippe," which he has somewhere bestowed on her. If the Dean had ever occasion to resent Mrs. Sheridan's ill-humour, it was considerably justified by the vexation the respectable mother of a family must have felt, on seeing her property lavished in entertaining one, who often, from his whimsical singularities, denied her the respect due to a woman of birth and fortune, and the mistress of the house at which he was hospitably received. Miss Elizabeth Macfodden brought her husband, the doctor, an estate in land valued at £500 per annum, a considerable sum in those days; so that the marriage was far from being in any respect disadvantageous to him.

of the dramatic entertainments he had provided for them: but by none was he so enthusiastically admired as by Miss Chamberlaine. Having obtained an introduction to the sisters of Mr. Sheridan, Miss Elizabeth Sheridan and Mrs. Sheen, the praises that she heard of him in the midst of his family, confirmed the prepossession that his appearance in public had first excited in her breast. It was his exemplary conduct as a son, a brother, and a friend, that riveted her esteem; for nature never formed a purer mind than hers, nor education a more truly modest, diffident, and gentle character. Thus began this partiality, which, in contradiction to all the prejudices and all the precautions of her father, was destined to unite Miss Chamberlaine's fate to that of a man connected with theatrical life, and to develope her talents for literature by an intercourse with one possessed of similar inclinations.

It does not appear that she had ever had any personal interview with Mr. Sheridan, till an occasion presented itself which enabled her,

without transgressing the bounds of propriety, to express the mingled regard and admiration which she felt for him.

This was on the occasion of the memorable riot of January 1746, commonly called "Kelly's Riot," the particulars of which are too well known, to be noticed here by any thing more than a very brief recapitulation.

This theatrical disturbance was occasioned by Mr. Sheridan's spirited resistance to an attempt made by a young Galway gentleman to force his way behind the scenes, whither he pursued one of the actresses (the celebrated George Anne Bellamy) and so terrified her, that she was obliged to take refuge in her dressing-room, and could not again venture to appear on the stage.

Nothing could be more temperate and moderate than the conduct held by Mr. Sheridan upon this occasion. But not so the manner in which Mr. Kelly (the name of the young gentleman) received it. After the play, he forced his way to the manager's dressing-room, and

there attacked Mr. Sheridan with such ungentlemanlike language, as compelled him to exercise some degree of violence in his own defence. Inflamed with rage at his deserved disgrace, Kelly immediately left the theatre for a club, where several of his friends were assembled, and related what had passed, in the manner that best favoured his own views. He declared (an assertion totally devoid of foundation) that Mr. Sheridan's servants held him while their master unmercifully beat him. This so greatly excited the indignation of his friends, that a powerful fighting party was formed, and the next day all persons were threatened with violence who dared to espouse the party of Mr. Sheridan. To such a height did they carry this spirit of vengeance, that some days afterwards, Mr. Sheridan, being to perform Horatio in the Fair Penitent, several letters, cards, and messages, were sent to him, warning him not to leave his house that evening, and to take particular care to be well guarded even there. These friendly and well-meant admonitions, Mr.

Sheridan did not think it prudent to neglect; and, in consequence, when the Galway gentlemen arrived at the theatre, they learnt, to their infinite mortification, that he was not to play that night. Incensed at thus missing their prey, they proceeded to the most extravagant outrages: attacking the green room, breaking open the dressing-rooms, and even thrusting their swords into all the chests and presses of the wardrobe, in order to feel, as they said, if Sheridan was not concealed there. Such conduct, of course, increased the terror and ill-will with which they were beheld by all the sober part of the public; and, among the members of the college to which Mr. Sheridan had formerly belonged, and the higher order of citizens, a party was formed, to protect Mr. Sheridan from the confederacy of Mr. Kelly and his adherents. The spirit thus excited soon spread from the city of Dublin throughout the whole kingdom. During the time this dispute lasted, it was the custom of those that were for and against Mr. Sheridan, to go about the streets provided with

fire-arms, and apprehensions of the most serious nature were entertained, from the high state of irritation in the public mind. A paper war was also commenced, in the course of which it is said as many pamphlets were published, as would, if collected, make a large octavo volume.

The first blow was struck by a letter that appeared in Faulkner's Journal, Dublin, Jan. 25, 1746.

This letter was a justification and defence of the conduct and character of Mr. Sheridan, and ably traced his unimpeachable career, as well known to his countrymen, as a gentleman, a man of letters, and a man of honour. This was followed up by a poetical effusion from a different hand. It was published without a name, being the production of Miss Chamberlaine. Mr. Sheridan was highly complimented in it through the medium of a dramatic fable.

THE OWLS:

A FABLE.

Addressed to Mr. Sheridan, on his late Affair in the Theatre.

Envy will Merit still pursue,
As shade succeeds to light;
And though a shade obstructs the view,
It proves the substance right.

If Worth appears, and gets its due,
(But oh! how rare that gain!)
The satyrs and the mimic crew
Shall grin behind the scene.

Some artifice shall find a way,
Some secret whisper dwell;
But to defeat such arts, you say,
The maxim is—do well.

Now hear a tale, a moral too,
Allow it poor, or pretty.
The owls one day, (if Fame says true)
Composed a sage committee.

'Twas there resolved in cool debate,
Each offering his true sense;
That Phœbus, source of light and heat,
Was nothing but a nuisance.

To whom the glorious lamp of day
In mildest radiance spoke :—
" Shall I withdraw my genial ray
Because your vigil's broke?

" Shall Nature's frame and Nature's laws
By me be unattended,
Because, forsooth, a noble cause!
An Owl or two's offended!

" O sons of gloom! get brighter sense,
More conscionably speak!
Why should my beams be less intense
Because your eyes are weak?

" The fault is yours, if faults you see,
The punishing be mine;
And my complete revenge shall be,
I still will rise and shine."

These lines, in the commencement of which the author evidently had the well-known sentiment of Pope in her memory, breathe the innocent enthusiasm of a youthful mind, ever prone to exaggerate the merits of the object it nas chosen, and they were successful in reaching the " Phœbus" of her verse. Miss Cham-

berlaine's next attempt was in prose; and an anonymous pamphlet appeared from her pen, defending Mr. Sheridan's conduct with a vigour, elegance, and spirit, which could not fail of exciting his favourable attention towards the unknown author of it. The animosity of Mr. Sheridan's enemies, however, continued unabated, and a party was formed to prevent his appearing in the character of Richard the Third. Finding themselves foiled by the spirited opposition of the citizens, the collegians, and, above all, the celebrated patriot and physician Dr. Charles Lucas, they let the play proceed in quiet that night, and left the theatre; but it was only to form fresh plans, and breathe forth deeper vows of vengeance. To those who are only accustomed to the bloodless disturbances of a London theatre, the comparatively harmless ebullitions even of an O. P. riot, the dangerous predicament in which an Irish manager was placed, would scarcely be credible, if there were not so many authentic documents to prove it. The Galway men doomed Mr. Sheridan to

destruction. A horse was always in readiness, for his murderer to depart at a minute's warning. Dr. Lucas was also marked out for death. Such was the situation of affairs, when Mr. Sheridan was once more called upon to brave this prejudiced and incensed portion of the public. He was to take a part in a charity play, which the performers in the Dublin Theatre annually gave; and the governors, who were all persons of consequence, insisted upon their right to the benefit of this goodly custom. They sent the manager word, that they would take upon themselves to protect him from violence or injury in the performance of it; yet, notwithstanding the governors, appeared there according to promise, with their white wands of office, notwithstanding the presence of above a hundred ladies of the first distinction, dressed in all the elegance of fashion, who, unable to obtain places in the pit and boxes, had, in order to assist and support the manager, accepted of accommodations on the stage, the clamour was so great that Mr.

Sheridan was obliged to withdraw without speaking; and after the riot and confusion of this night, the theatre was shut up by order of the Master of the Revels.

An appeal was made by both parties to the laws, and both parties were tried in the presence of Lord Chief Justice Marlay. Mr. Sheridan's cause came on the first. He was tried on the ground of assaulting and beating the gentleman on the nineteenth of January, in his dressing-room; but the provocation he had received appeared to the jury so amply to justify his conduct, and it was so satisfactorily proved that no other person, save the manager, had touched the complainant, that the jury acquitted Mr. Sheridan without going out of the box. The trial of his opponent, for the mischief done at the theatre, in the dressing-rooms, and the wardrobe, took up a greater portion of time. The result was, that the assailant was found guilty, and sentenced to a fine of £500 and three months' imprisonment.

After sentence was given, the Lord Chief

Justice animadverted upon the necessity of maintaining order and decorum at the theatre ; adding, that if any person forced his way behind the scenes, where money was not taken, and that person was apprehended and brought into the court, and the fact proved there, he should be prosecuted with the utmost severity of the law.

The gentleman who had been thus condemned, after suffering one week's confinement, applied to Mr. Sheridan to obtain a mitigation of his sentence. Mr. Sheridan instantly solicited the Government to relinquish the fine of £500, which was granted ; and then became solicitor and bail himself to the Court of King's Bench for the enlargement of the prisoner.

Thus ended this memorable dispute : but not so transient were its consequences. The permanent advantage which the theatre derived from Mr. Sheridan's firmness on this occasion, can only be estimated by a comparison of the sums received there (benefits excluded), from the year 1743 to 1758, which was from two

thousand per annum to ten thousand : and this change was, by his contemporaries, entirely attributed to the happy revolution effected by Mr. Sheridan in 1746, and the additional inducements held out in consequence to all persons of rank and character in the country, to support with their presence and patronage the credit of the national drama.

When extricated from these unpleasant embarrassments, Mr. Sheridan had leisure to reflect upon the unknown champion, who had so ably defended his cause, in publishing the best pamphlet that had been produced on the subject. He soon discovered the author, and the desire of an introduction to Miss Chamberlaine naturally followed. This introduction took place at the house of his sister, Mrs. Sheen; and the interview produced in the mind of Mr. Sheridan exactly the impression which Miss Chamberlaine must be supposed to have desired; for Mr. Sheridan was so captivated by her conversation, that a lively and reciprocal attachment was the result of this first meeting,

and they were married by her beloved brother, the Rev. Walter Chamberlaine, in the year 1747, Miss Chamberlaine having just completed her twenty-second year.

CHAPTER II.

Domestic Life of Mrs. Frances Sheridan.—Female Intimates.—Family of Mr. Sheridan.—Anecdote of the Banshi.—Ancient and Modern Irish Cookery.—Quilca.—The Painted Chamber.—Whimsical Anecdotes of Walter Chamberlaine.—Poem of "The Three Travellers."

THE first years of Mrs. Sheridan's marriage were passed in the happiest manner, but so as to leave her little leisure for literary avocations. As Mr. Sheridan had purchased the paternal property of Quilca from his elder brother, her time was divided between that country residence and Dublin, where Mr. Sheridan had a house, in Dorset Street.

But it was in the country that Mrs. Sheridan passed some of her happiest hours; and there her amiable disposition and cultivated mind attracted the notice and conciliated the regard of all her visitors.

Mrs. Sheridan's circle of town acquaintance was rather select than numerous, but her female

intimates were all distinguished for the best qualities either of the heart or understanding. Among them, I find the names of Mrs. Cunningham, a lady of most amiable character and considerable literary attainments; and Mrs. Montgomery, mother of the three celebrated beauties, the Honourable Mrs. Beresford, Mrs. Gardiner,* and Anna, Marchioness of Townshend. Mrs. Sheridan was surrounded by her husband's family, whose regard she cultivated with affectionate and sedulous attention. Mr. Sheridan had three sisters living.† The eldest,

* First wife of Lord Mountjoy.

† In the "Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, by John Watkins, LL.D.," page 44, it is said of Dr. Sheridan, "The youngest of his *two* daughters married," &c.; but this is a mistake. Dr. Sheridan had *seven* children: three sons, James, Thomas, and Richard; and four (not two) daughters. Elizabeth, above-mentioned; Anne (afterwards Mrs. Sheen); Emily, who died young, and Hester (afterwards Mrs. Knowles).

Like many Irish ladies who resided during the early part of life in the country, Miss Elizabeth Sheridan was a firm believer in the *Banshi*, or female dæmon attached to certain

Miss Elizabeth Sheridan, distinguished in her youth as a beauty at the castle of Dublin, was nine years older than Mr. Sheridan, to whom, notwithstanding, she looked up with a mixture of affection and reverence, amply justified by the kindness and liberality of his conduct towards her. This lady had a lively and agreeable recollection of the days of Swift and Stella, and often mentioned, from memory, many circumstances connected with that extraordinary pair. Miss Elizabeth Sheridan at that time resided chiefly with her married sister Mrs. Sheen, at whose house Mrs. Sheridan had been first in-

ancient Irish families. She seriously maintained that the Banshi of the Sheridan family was heard wailing beneath the windows of Quilca before the news arrived from France of Mrs. Frances Sheridan's death at Blois, thus affording them a preternatural intimation of the impending melancholy event. A niece of Miss Sheridan's made her very angry by observing, that as Mrs. Frances Sheridan was by birth a Chamberlaine, a family of English extraction, she had no right to the guardianship of an Irish fairy, and that therefore the Banshi must have made a mistake!

troduced to the object of her choice. Mrs. Sheen was married in a manner apparently fortunate, and had several children, but died rather young. Mr. Sheen was an Englishman, and came over in the suite of a Lord Lieutenant. He was a courtier, gay, fashionable, and distinguished for personal attractions; but the death of his wife, which happened under circumstances peculiarly affecting, produced a great change in his temper and manners. He never could be brought to think of a second marriage, saying, that "no woman should ever take the place of Nancy Sheridan in his house or heart;" and to this resolution, with which the charms and virtues of his first wife inspired him, he ever afterwards adhered. Mr. Sheen was appointed to a considerable place in the Customs; the income of which, even after he was superannuated, he continued to enjoy till he died. Hester, the third sister, who married Mr. Knowles, was younger than Mr. Sheridan. At this time, Quilca might be reckoned the rallying place where Mr. Sheridan's generous hos-

pitality collected all the branches of his scattered family; and in the society of his relatives and their children, he and Mrs. Sheridan enjoyed a happiness far superior to any they could have derived from a more extended and ostentatious species of intercourse. Yet, even at this time, there were not wanting persons who accused Mr. Sheridan, most unjustly, of extravagance; and alleged, in support of the charge, the elegance of his paternal residence of Quilca in the county of Cavan, which was so far from realizing Swift's often-quoted, but unfaithful description, that it possessed every convenience and comfort to be desired in a rural abode.

It was here that, surrounded by a party of chosen friends, Mr. Sheridan on one occasion was enabled to make an estimate between the advantages of ancient and modern cookery. Although the enthusiasm for every thing that was old had not at that time risen to the height it has since done, several of his guests were of opinion that their ancestors were the true possessors of the *savoir vivre*, and were very de-

sirous that Mr. Sheridan should give them a specimen of the old Irish taste in hospitality. They particularly enlarged on the merits of a "swilled mutton," a dish which they affirmed preserved the juices of the animal in much greater perfection than any mode of dressing in which its limbs are divided. Mr. Sheridan agreed to the proposal, and accordingly a day was fixed for this revival of primæval hospitality. The floor of the eating-room was strewed with rushes, and the different dishes, cooked after the ancient manner recommended, were placed upon the table. The sight of the antique preparations pleased these lovers of simplicity. Nothing could be more agreeable than dining in a room strewed with fresh cut rushes, and the "swilled mutton" was hailed as a noble relic of former times. It consisted of a sheep roasted whole, in the inside of which was insinuated a lamb; the lamb was again stuffed with a hare and rabbits. There was also a goose, the body of which was stuffed with a duck, and other delicacies of a similar description. Having

been so loud in their commendations of these dishes, the guests tried to do honour to them on their appearance, but found them strangely repugnant to the taste of modern palates. Still they affected to relish them, praised the juiciness of the mutton, and the high taste of the goose; but through all their affected approbation, Mr. Sheridan saw they were thoroughly disappointed. He however suffered them to regale on these ungrateful viands, having only given a private hint to one or two friends to reserve themselves for something that was to succeed. When every one was completely satisfied, and more than satisfied, with the trial of their forefather's mode of living, these antique dishes were taken away, and replaced by a second course; consisting of venison, wild fowl, turbot from Dublin, and every delicacy the most grateful to a modern taste. The two or three epicures who had received a hint to reserve themselves till now, with great satisfaction began their real dinner; while the rest, who had already dined heartily, could only lament their

mistake, which had left them no appetite for the luxurious fare that succeeded.

Mr. Sheridan's abode of Quilca, though much admired, was only a cottage. The roof of the principal sitting-room being coved, Lewis, the scene and portrait-painter, offered to convert this defect into a beauty; to which Mr. Sheridan consenting, the artist painted the cieling with classical designs, which formed a very elegant finish to his rural apartment. On this occasion, Mr. Sheridan incurred no expense, as the idea solely originated in Lewis's desire to make some return for the many kindnesses he had received from his patron in his capacity of manager of the theatre.

When the ruin of Mr. Sheridan's affairs obliged him to give up Ireland, a part of Quilca was mortgaged to his brother-in-law Mr. Sheen, and the rest left in the hands of a distant relation, who was to have managed it for Mr. Sheridan's benefit. This relation let the remainder of the lands and the cottage to a farmer; but long after the original proprietor

had been banished by adversity from his native land, and *she*, the faithful partner of his wanderings, whose virtues had adorned, and whose talents had irradiated this comparatively sequestered scene, had breathed her last in a foreign country, the humble occupant of Quilca still preserved unaltered the coved and painted chamber, and many were the visitants whom curiosity attracted to the spot where admiration of departed genius was blended with recollections of domestic worth.

To return from this seeming digression to our narrative. The brothers of Mrs. Sheridan were necessarily separated from her by professional engagements, excepting the Rev. Walter Chamberlaine. In his society she experienced great pleasure and improvement; for although an oddity, like his father, he was possessed of considerable abilities. The following instances of his readiness and humour are worth preserving. When he was going to perform duty one Sunday at his parish church, some rude boys, struck with something singular and whim-

sical in his manner and appearance, pursued him with hooting and laughter to the very doors. Walter Chamberlaine marked the offenders, and being that day to preach as well as to read prayers, substituted in the place of the sermon he had previously intended to give, an extempore one, with the following text from the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings, v. 23, " And as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head"— v. 24, " And he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them."

As soon as Walter Chamberlaine had pronounced this terrible text, his eye sought out the trembling culprits, whom he soon discovered, vainly endeavouring to hide themselves behind others of the congregation. Then directing his looks fixedly on them, he began

a discourse upon the reverence due both to age, and to the sacred character, and the terrible punishments denounced by scripture against those who failed to render it to either. Though not an aged man, like the prophet Elisha, he was a minister of God, and after emphatically painting the enormity of turning into ridicule one who exercised the sacred function, he enlarged upon the sin of those who mocked their neighbour for any infirmity, misfortune, or personal defect whatever. This unpremeditated effusion produced the full impression intended to be made; and it was the opinion of many who remembered to have been present in the church, that it was not only one of the best sermons Mr. Chamberlaine had ever preached, but one of the best they had ever heard.

Another time, being to preach before a congregation in the country composed of none but the poorest and most illiterate classes, he found that, in a fit of absence of mind (not unusual with him), he had brought, in the place of the discourse he intended to have pro-

nounced, another written for the purpose of being delivered before a genteel audience in Dublin. A pause ensued. What was to be done? "Lord bless my soul!" muttered Walter Chamberlaine, "I have put the wrong sermon in my pocket!" Then, composing himself to address his hearers with becoming solemnity, "I find, my brethren," he said, "I have brought with me, by mistake, a sermon utterly above your comprehensions—I therefore shall not deliver it, but though unprepared, shall endeavour, with the blessing of God, to give you something from myself that may be of benefit to you."

He accordingly chose a text, and pronounced another admirable extempore sermon; as well suited to the wants and capacities of his ignorant audience, as the written one was ill-adapted to them. Walter Chamberlaine was a poet, and the following *jeu d'esprit* affords a favourable specimen of his talent and fancy. As it has more than once been printed without acknowledgment, and has even been attri-

buted to the late Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan, I here give the first correct copy that has been published, with the name of the real author.

THE TRAVELLERS:

A TALE.

By the Reverend Walter Chamberlaine.

A good repute, a virtuous name,
Philosophers set forth
As the unerring path to fame,
If fame consist in worth.

This jewel, rarely to be found,
Sets merit full in view:
A moral glory shines around
Whate'er the virtuous do.

The precious ointment, gently shed,
O'er mental ills prevails,
And where the fragrant medicine's spread,
It animates and heals.

Yet hard it is to use it right,
Though beautiful to view,
It shines distinguishingly bright—
How transitory too!

Like glass it glitters, soon 'tis crack'd,
Irreparably frail—
All Moralists allow the fact,
So I apply my Tale.

When things inanimate could speak,
Fire once agreed with Water
A friendly jaunt one day to take,
But where—'tis no great matter.

It happen'd that the day before
Each left his different station,
They chose a third—worth twenty more—
And this was—Reputation.

The three companions now reflect,
If chance should once divide 'em,
How each his letters might direct,
Or who would surest guide 'em.

Says Water, " Friends, you'll hear my name,
Though lost upon a mountain;
Enquire at any murmuring stream,
Or seek me in a fountain.

" Where marshes stagnate, bogs extend,
Green reeds and turfy sods
Direct a path to meet your friend—
A path the bulrush nods.

" From deep cascades I sometimes pour,
Through meadows gently glide—
I drop a dew, descend a shower,
Or thunder in a tide."

" Your restless make," quoth Fire, " I knew,
Just like your parent Ocean—
I like to rove as well as you,
My life consists in motion.

" But should I stray, you'll find me soon
In matches, flints, and tapers:
And though my temper's brisk and boon,
I'm often in the vapours.

" From Smoke sure tidings you may get,
It can't subsist without me;
Or find me, like some fond coquette,
With fifty *sparks* about me.

" In poets all my marks you see,
Since flash and smoke reveal me:
Suspect me always near Nat. Lee—
Ev'n Blackmore can't conceal me.

" In Milton's page I glow by art,
One flame intense and even—
In Shakespeare's blaze, a sudden start,
Like lightning shot from heaven.

" In many more, a living ray,
Through various forms I shift—
I'm gently lambent while I'm *Gay*,
But brightest when I'm *Swift*.

" In different shapes, too, am I seen,
Among the young and fair,
And as the virtues shine within,
You'll ever find me there.

" The best of slaves I'm call'd by men,
When held in proper durance;
But if I once do mischief,—then
I'm heard of at th'Insurance!

" Through Nature's walks I take my flight
And kindle as I run—
Up from the tinder-box, I light
The chariot of the Sun!"

" Alas!" poor Reputation cried,
" How happy in each other:
Such numerous marks must surely guide
Each straggler to his brother.

" 'Tis I alone must be undone,
Such ills has Fate assign'd me—
If *I* be lost, 'tis ten to one,
You never more will find me."

The best imitations of "The Travellers" is "Reputation," an allegory, by Cunningham. Yet upon a comparison of the two, the superiority of Mr. Chamberlaine's poem will be apparent.

CHAPTER III.

Birth of Mrs. Sheridan's Children.—Thomas.—Charles Francis. —Richard Brinsley, and Alicia.—Second Theatrical Riot. —Contradiction of a passage in Mrs. Inchbald's Remarks upon the Tragedy of Mahomet.—Unpublished Anecdote of Digges.—Second Anecdote of Digges.—Birth of Sackville Sheridan.—Anecdote of Lord Germaine.—Anecdote of the Duke of Dorset.

At this time the claims of a rising family were so numerous, as to demand all Mrs. Sheridan's care and attention.

Her maternal tenderness was destined to receive a severe shock in the loss of her eldest boy, who was born in 1747, and named Thomas, after his father. He died at three years old, in 1750, at an age in which parents already begin to discover the interesting signs of intelligence and sensibility in their offspring, which was particularly the case on this occasion.

In the rest of her children Mrs. Sheridan was more fortunate; Charles Francis, the second son, was so named after Charles Gardiner,

the father of the first Lord Mountjoy, and his own mother, whose name was Frances.

He was born June 1750, the same year in which she lost her eldest boy.

Richard Brinsley,* who was also christened Butler, after the Earl of Lanesborough, was born September 1751.

Her fourth child was a daughter, named Alicia after the Honourable Alicia Caulfield, sister to Lord Charlemont. Alicia was born January 1753.

A mind like Mrs. Sheridan's must have been peculiarly susceptible of maternal claims. In "Sidney Biddulph," she may be here supposed to give a transcript of her own feelings.

"How delightful are the sensations, my dear Cecilia, that I feel hourly springing in my heart! Surely the tenderness of a mother can

* In a work I shall often have occasion to notice, "Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, by John Watkins, LL.D.," it is said, page 157, that his first name was "after his uncle's;" but this is a mistake. His three names of Richard, Brinsley, and Butler, were given by Lord Lanesborough.

never be sufficiently repaid—I never see my dear little girl, but I think such were the tender sentiments, the sweet anxieties, that my honoured and beloved mother felt when her Sidney was such a brat as this! Then I say, surely I have a right to all the duty, all the filial love, that this creature can shew me in return for my fondness....

"How delightful will be the task of expanding and forming the minds of these cherubs!....."

With such feelings, the birth of a child of her own sex, over whose education she might more particularly preside, must have been an additional source of satisfaction to Mrs. Sheridan: and accordingly we find that, engrossed by her pleasing duties, she confined herself to a very small and select circle of her own and her husband's friends. Mr. Sheridan's profession, however, necessarily threw him into a more widely extended sphere, and led him into gay connexions, which, however flattering to his merit, in the end proved fatal to his interests.

Having already experienced how much a manager may be opposed and thwarted in the discharge of his duty, by the insolence of individuals, and the malevolence of party, Mr. Sheridan had frequently, since the riot of 1746, consulted with his friends upon the expediency of establishing a Theatrical Club; to consist of persons qualified to judge of the merit of such pieces as should be presented to their notice, and also possessed of influence sufficient to support the manager against malicious and unmerited attacks. This was the origin of the too-celebrated "Beef-Steak Club." An institution authorized by ancient custom in every theatre, but generally consisting of a meeting of actors and writers for the stage, to which were occasionally added Amateurs, who might be considered in the light of honorary members.

But, under Mr. Sheridan's management, the "Beef-Steak Club" included nearly all that the metropolis of Dublin could boast of talent, rank, and fashion. Still it was begun with no

party intention on the side of the manager, although afterwards converted into a most fatal engine of party against himself.

In the year 1753, the club consisted of about sixty noblemen and gentlemen, chiefly members of parliament, friends of Mr. Sheridan, and admirers of the Drama. Perhaps no period ever witnessed an assemblage so calculated, by spirit, wit, and talent, to decide upon the merits of works of genius. There seldom were more than thirty at the same time at these meetings, which took place at the Theatre; and the celebrated Margaret Woffington, who then sparkled the brightest star in the Dublin theatrical hemisphere, was (with ill-fated gallantry) elected president of this committee of taste.

To this flattering distinction it must be allowed she was entitled, on many accounts Besides her unrivalled popularity as an actress, she possessed, we are told,* a good understanding, which was much improved by company

* Davies's Life of Garrick.

and books. She had a most attractive sprightliness in her manners, and considerable vivacity and humour; she was affable, good-natured, and charitable. Her company was sought after by men of the first rank and distinction; persons of the gravest character, and most eminent for learning, were proud of her acquaintance, and charmed with her conversation. Notwithstanding all these advantages, however, her moral character was such as to exclude her from the society of her own sex; and she comforted herself for their just disdain by the very unfounded remark, "that the conversation of women consisted of nothing but silks and scandal."

Mr. Sheridan found it impossible, therefore, to introduce her to his wife: a compliment that would have been the more gratifying, as Mrs. Sheridan kept up no intercourse whatever with any of the other performers. It was solely from this consideration, and the desire, at the same time, to pay some tribute to genius, by which he had so materially benefitted as a

manager, that he was induced to shew Mrs. Woffington a distinction which excited the jealousy of the other performers.

The fame of these theatrical parties increased the ill-humour of the *uninitiated*, who were not invited to partake of them; and as the noblemen and gentlemen that composed them were chiefly supporters of Government, Mr. Sheridan was most falsely and injuriously supposed to take a more active part in the politics of the day, than was becoming in an individual whose best interests were inseparably connected with the favour of the public. It is well known that the revival of the tragedy of Mahomet, was the occasion of the explosion of those discontents which had so long been gathering; and that the following was the passage marked out for tumultuous applause.

" If, ye powers divine!
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers;
Who, singled out by the community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe!

This passage, as applied by the anti-courtiers to the ministers then in power, was honoured with the singular distinction of an "encore;" and the fine scenes between Zaphna and Palmira, which are usually the most admired in the play, were this night suffered to pass unnoticed; while all the applause was directed towards the character of Alcanor, the personage who recites the speech above quoted.

The audience being thus obviously influenced by the spirit of party, Mr. Sheridan was certainly guilty of an oversight in giving out the play for a second representation: but he thought to obviate the inconveniences attached to such a compliance by remonstrating—or, in the simple but expressive phrase of the Historian of the Theatre, "Reading a Lecture" to the company on the duties of an actor, previous to the ensuing night's performance. In this Green-room Lecture he says:—

"I lay it down as a maxim, that the business of an actor is to divest himself, as much as possible, of his private sentiments, and to

enter, with all the spirit he is master of, into the character he represents; and this is an indisputable claim which the public, in general, have upon him.

"But if an actor, in order to please part of that public, should by any *unusual emphasis, gesture, or significant look*, mark out a passage in his part (which at another juncture he would pass by lightly) as a *party-stroke*—he in that instance steps out of his feigned character into his natural one; than which nothing can be more insolent to the audience, or more calculated to bring disapprobation and disgrace not only on himself, but upon all his brethren."

In this discourse, which certainly contains very valuable hints in addition to Hamlet's Advice to the Players, the attentive observer of character will remark much of Mr. Sheridan's spirit of order and system, and the desire with which he was actuated on all occasions, of impressing a sense of moral responsibility, and of their duties in the relation in which

they stood to the public, upon the community of which he was the head. Unfortunately, his good intentions were not seconded on this occasion.

Mr. Digges, the actor who played Alcanor, and who in the representation of that part had complied with the wishes of the audience, in the repetition of the obnoxious speech, conceived himself reflected upon: and, applying the whole of the lecture to himself, desired to know what were the Manager's directions, in case of the repetition of a similar demand on the part of the audience. Mr. Sheridan's reply was, that "he should give him no directions: he must use his own discretion." Digges then said, "Sir, if I should comply with the demand of the audience, and repeat the speech as I did before, am I to incur your censure for so doing?" The Manager replied, "Not at all; I leave you to use your own discretion." Nothing could be more moderate or conciliatory than this answer, the meaning of which was apparent.

Mr. Sheridan, as a friend and respectful well-wisher to Government, by which every person in public life is supported, could not authorize the repetition of a particular passage in a play after it had been turned by the malignant interpretations of individuals into a direct attack upon *that* Government, which had always distinguished his honourable exertions by its countenance and favour. At the same time, as Mr. Sheridan was no courtier, he assumed it as an incontrovertible position, that, should the audience take the responsibility into their own hands, by insisting on the repetition of the favourite speech, the actor, as the servant of the public, was bound to obey them; and the manager disclaimed any idea of fettering his power by imposing further restrictions upon him.*

* In Mrs. Inchbald's "Remarks" upon the Tragedy of "Mahomet," there is quite a false account given of this transaction.

"On its first representation on the Dublin Stage" (it was *not* the *first*, it was a revival:) "a few sentences in the part of

Unfortunately, a difference of some standing had grown up between Mr. Digges and the

of Alcanor had such accidental allusion to some great men, or man, then in power in *that nation*," (Query: the *nation* of *Dublin*) "that the audience, enraptured upon the utterance, and willing to show their own implication, encored those lines with such unanimous vehemence, that the performer thought it his duty to repeat them, in compliance with their desire. The late Mr. Sheridan (father of the author of the School for Scandal) was at that time manager of the Theatre of Dublin, in which adventure all his property, all his hopes, were embarked; yet he boldly censured the actor who had yielded to the command of the audience, and forbade a repetition of any speech in the part of Alcanor, however loudly it might be called for on the following night. Mr. Sheridan knew the predicament in which he was placed; he knew the fury of an exasperated audience in Ireland: he knew their power over all his possessions—yet, firm in his politics, he beheld, on the next evening, his theatre totally demolished, and his own life in danger, without revoking the *peremptory orders* he had issued."

This is a very spirited climax, and a highly-wrought picture of a political martyr, or rather madman; for such Mr. Sheridan would assuredly have been, with a wife and young family, to have risked his *all* in a cause in which he had no concern. But, unfortunately, the eulogium, if it be meant

for

manager; which, as it has not been noticed in any preceding relation of this transaction, is here given exactly as it occurred.

It is the custom at all theatres that a person appointed for that purpose should summon the performers, according as they are wanted, upon the stage. This summons Digges had, on one occasion, disregarded, to the great annoyance of the other actors, and disappointment of the audience. Upon Mr. Sheridan's remonstrating with him upon the inconvenience he had thus occasioned, by not being drest for his part, and by keeping the audience a considerable time waiting, Digges replied: "that it was in consequence of his not having received the usual summons." To this Mr. Sheridan answered, "Excuse me, Mr. Digges, the man assured me

for such, was totally undeserved by his conduct, which was regulated by the dictates of moderation and prudence.

There have been published some very good "Remarks" by Cooke, the actor, "on Mrs. Inchbald's Remarks;" and certainly, notwithstanding that lady's acknowledged genius, her observations on the drama are often singularly crude, superficial, and dogmatical.

that he had repeatedly given you notice you were wanted on the stage." Digges, who, like Mr. Sheridan, was a gentleman both by birth and education, and who was of a haughty and violent temper, answered with some heat: "Would you believe the assertion of such a fellow as that in preference to mine?" To this Mr. Sheridan unguardedly replied, "He never gave me reason to disbelieve him; *that man never told me a lie.*"

This expression, by which the manager only meant to infer that a person of integrity, however low his station, was not, on *that* account, to be considered as unworthy of credit, rankled in the mind of Digges; and some nights afterwards Mrs. Ryder (wife to the manager of that name, but at that time a very young person) overheard Digges talking over the affront he had received with Mrs. Ward, an actress, in the green-room. On this occasion he made use of the remarkable expression:— "I shall find an opportunity to be revenged

on Sheridan for doubting my word." How fatally he succeeded will appear in the sequel!

Actuated by these unfriendly feelings towards Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Digges on the second night of the performance (March 2, 1754), instead of making use of the discretionary power entrusted to him by the manager, hinted, on the reiteration of the command for this party speech, that he had Mr. Sheridan's positive orders not to indulge the public with it. The most violent outcries for the manager ensued. Mr. Sheridan did not judge it prudent to comply with their summons; and, being strongly impressed with the idea that personal mischief was intended to himself, he got into a chair, and returned to his own house, whither he was guarded by his friends to the door.

The news of the manager's departure only rendered the rioters more furious. They insisted on his return; but in consideration of his living at some distance, declared they would wait patiently one hour.

This was certainly the critical period on which Mr. Sheridan's fortunes hung: and there is little doubt, from the inclination thus betrayed for a compromise, that, had he presented himself within the course of that eventful hour, all might yet have been well. At the same time, those who feel inclined to blame the line of conduct he pursued on this occasion, must remember that his life had already been threatened, both in public and private, by these very persons; so that his mistrust of them, however it may be lamented, cannot be thought surprising. The hour elapsed, and the rioters renewed their call. Still Mr. Sheridan did not appear. Two of the principal leaders then rose up from the middle of the pit: this was the concerted signal. A young man in the pit stood up and cried out, "God bless His Majesty King George!" with three huzzas; and this sound, in general the harbinger of peace and joy, was made, on this occasion, the watchword for one of the most disgraceful scenes ever recorded in the annals of the Drama. At

the end of the third huzza, the work of destruction began. The benches were torn up; the chandeliers, which were very valuable, broken to pieces; and the audience part of the house destroyed in five minutes. After this outrage, some moved to fire the house, others to attack the wardrobe. A party leaped upon the stage, and with their swords and other instruments slashed the curtain, which was finely painted, and cost a great sum of money, and broke and cut to pieces all the scenes within their reach. Some attempts were made to attack the wardrobe: but finding that place well defended, they retired; and in so doing, a party of rioters who went off through the box-room, dragged the grate full of burning coals into the middle of the room, and then laid some of the broken doors of the boxes upon it; but, notwithstanding these preparations, which could hardly have been expected to fail of their effect, the intended mischief was prevented by a timely discovery, and the theatre was not set on fire. But the loss Mr. Sheridan

sustained in his property was such as he was never afterwards able to retrieve, and produced a complete change in the aspect of his affairs. Such was the conclusion of his meritorious endeavours to deserve the favour of the public! Still, all the well-disposed part of *that* public sympathized in his misfortune as in a general calamity; and his daughter has often heard his surviving contemporaries, particularly those ladies who remembered the advantageous effect his character and conduct produced on the regulation of the theatre, lament the disorder and anarchy that almost immediately ensued there, and at the same time expatiate on the period of his undisputed influence, as the golden era of the Irish Drama.*

* It has been observed, that no enmities are stronger than those contracted within the walls of a theatre; and of *that* the subsequent conduct of Mr. Digges affords sufficient proof. Digges, according to the accounts of those times, possessed a commanding figure, an impressive countenance, and a noble deportment; but the effect of all these advantages was lessened by a harsh, inharmonious voice, that sufficiently

The peril to which Mr. Sheridan was exposed, during the night of the riot at the theatre, was sufficiently announced the very unpleasant temper for which he was remarkable.

His resentment against Mr. Sheridan, for the incautious expression he had unguardedly used, after appearing to sleep for a period of thirty years, shewed itself again on the following occasion. In the year 1784, in Dublin, Digges chose for his own benefit once more to revive the Tragedy of Mahomet: and, in order to give more attraction to the entertainment of the night, caused it to be announced in the bills as "*the Play that had been the ruin of Mr. Sheridan in* 1754."

Such a singular proceeding did not fail to excite the public curiosity, and Digges appeared in his favourite character of Alcanor, in hopes to renew in part his former triumph.

One of Mr. Sheridan's daughters was in her private-box at the Theatre, and witnessed the manner in which Digges (then an old man) gave the memorable imprecation —

"Crush, crush those vipers," &c.

It was with all the energy of his youthful feelings, and the poignancy of remembered and unextinguishable hatred. But when he paused, to receive the rapturous applause, that had formerly marked the delivery of this famous party speech, a dead

the severest trial that, since her marriage, Mrs. Sheridan had to endure; and it was increased by the ill-judged precipitancy of a servant, who, running home from the theatre in an early stage of the disturbance, alarmed her with an exaggerated account that his master was in the most imminent danger of his life, and the theatre actually in flames. The agony of mind she suffered, during the moment of suspense that intervened between this alarming statement and the safe return of her husband, was productive of the most afflicting consequences. At this eventful period Mrs. Sheridan was near her fifth confinement; and the sufferings she endured had such an effect upon the health of the infant, that it expired three months after its birth in convulsions. Yet the behaviour of Mrs. Sheridan, on this trying occasion, is perhaps as perfect an example of unaffected kindness and gentleness of mind as ever was exhi-

a dead silence prevailed, and not a hand moved: so decided was the disapprobation of the public expressed at this attempt to revive forgotten animosities!

bited by a woman. Notwithstanding the cruel shock both her health and hopes had received by the servant's unguarded rashness, she neither at the time, nor afterwards, ever mentioned the circumstance to his master.

The child, born under such unfortunate auspices, was christened Sackville, after his Grace the Duke of Dorset, then Lord Lieutenant, who did Mr. Sheridan the honour to stand godfather.

This kindness of the Duke, as well as many others shewn by that nobleman to Mr. Sheridan, proceeded solely from the esteem in which he held his private character, and the value that he set on his society; yet, from the violent height to which party spirit had risen, certain it is that the distinction with which he was always received by the Lord Lieutenant was in a great measure the cause of the clamour raised against Mr. Sheridan.

Having the honour to be thus personally considered by the Viceroy, Mr. Sheridan had been assiduous in paying his duty at the castle

He was also frequently at the Duke's private dinners and parties. The same friendship was extended to him for some years after this period; and in those domestic sorrows, from which the highest lot in human life is not exempted, Mr. Sheridan was the confidential depository of the sufferings then endured by a faithful subject and an affectionate father.*

* Mr. Cumberland has given some interesting anecdotes of Lord George Sackville, afterwards Lord Viscount Germaine, during his residence near Tunbridge, to which I may be permitted to add the following:

Some time after the disastrous affair of Minden had consigned that amiable nobleman to private life, and the name of Lord George Sackville was in some degree forgotten in the new title of Lord Germaine, a country clergyman, wholly unacquainted with his Lordship, applied for a living in his gift: with which request Lord Germaine, in consequence of the applicant's good character, thought proper to comply. The first time his Lordship came down to the country, the clergyman waited on him to return thanks to his patron. In the course of conversation, Lord Germaine chanced to ask him "if he was a sportsman?" The clergyman, little acquainted with the changes in the Court Calendar, and totally

But though thus distinguished by the Duke of Dorset in private, Mr. Sheridan, as a public character, had always preserved that prudent medium which alone became a man wholly unconnected with politics. Mr. Boswell is, therefore, wholly unfounded in the assertion, (vol. i. p. 369-70) that the pension which was granted several years afterwards to Mr. Sheridan, and respecting which Johnson expressed himself so ungraciously, was given to him "as a sufferer in the *cause of Government* when he was manager of the Theatre Royal in Ireland, where parties ran high in 1753." The fact was quite otherwise—and the anecdote tells equally to the honour of Mr. Sheridan, and of the

totally ignorant of his patron's former title, answered, "Not I, indeed, my Lord! Lord George Sackville does not hate the smell of gunpowder more than I do." When he took leave, a person who was present, and withdrew at the same time with him, informed the stranger of the confusion he had made. Upon which the simple man insisted on returning to apologize for his blunder, and begged his Lordship would impute it to the true cause—his utter ignorance of the title he had formerly borne.

friendly nobleman who so generously stepped forward to his assistance, in the hour of his distress.

The Duke of Dorset on learning Mr. Sheridan's theatrical misfortune, made him an offer, in the handsomest terms, of a pension of three hundred pounds a year, as some compensation for the losses he had sustained on that occasion. This offer Mr. Sheridan, however, respectfully declined: alleging that such a favour from Government would confirm all the unjust reports to his disadvantage, and cut him off from all future hopes of the patronage of the public; whereas if he persisted in refusing all remuneration, it was his trust and belief that his conduct would soon be viewed in a proper light, and that it would yet be in his power, by means of the theatre, to raise a fortune for his family.

The pension of two hundred a year, which was granted him above eight years afterwards, was solely on the ground of his literary merits.

Perceiving, however, that the current of popular prejudice ran so strongly against him, he fixed on the only course that prudence dictated: to give up the management, and let the theatre for a term of two years. He then embarked for England, where he knew his talents would ensure him the most favourable reception, leaving Mrs. Sheridan to settle affairs at home, and remain with her children till he could make the desired arrangements for her rejoining him.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Sheridan's removal to England.—Return in 1766.—Original Anecdotes of Spranger Barry.—Mr. Samuel Whyte of Grafton Street.—Examination of a passage in Dr. Watkins's "Memoirs" relative to the late Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.—Final Removal to England in 1758.—Mrs. Sheridan's Circle of English Friends.—Samuel Richardson.—Birth of Mrs. Sheridan's youngest daughter Elizabeth.—Miss Pennington.—Anecdotes.—Mrs. Scott.—Sarah Fielding.—Garrick.—Murphy.—Original Anecdote of Mrs. Barry.—History of the Tragedy of The Earl of Essex.

From the period of her marriage up to the present time, we have contemplated this admirable woman in the enjoyment of all the comforts and elegancies of life, easy in her circumstances, and blest in her family.

She was now called on to relinquish many of these advantages; but in her strong attachment to her husband, found a compensation for every sacrifice that could be required of her.

This attachment, the singular rise of which has been particularly related, formed the

governing principle of every period of Mrs. Sheridan's existence. Her husband was, with her, the object of a love and veneration to which all other objects were made subservient. He was the unbiassed choice of her youth; and, by a concurrence of circumstances fortunate but rare, that choice was confirmed by time, and constituted the happiness of her whole future life.

When Mr. Sheridan was able to send for her to England, she rejoined him there; leaving her children (except Charles Francis, who never went from his parents) under the care of kind and attentive sisters, with whom their time was spent, either at Quilca, or at their father's house in Dublin.

But towards the close of the year 1756 prospects began to clear.

The Dublin public became sensible of the impropriety of their behaviour to Mr. Sheridan; and these sentiments being made known to him through the medium of his correspondents, he accepted the favourable omen, and, September

1766, resumed the management of theatrical affairs.

It being thought necessary to address the audience with a few words of apology and explanation, before he renewed the representation of any of his favourite characters, Mr. Sheridan complied with this requisition: "and never," (says the theatrical historian) "never in the opinion of the best judges, did any man within their observation appear before the public with such address, or speak to the passions with such propriety. Tears gushed from the eyes of several of his male auditors;" and at the recollection of his severe losses and of his unmerited sufferings, the hearts of his precipitate but generous countrymen beat responsive in one universal flow of sympathy. The most unmingled plaudits welcomed the exile back to the scene he had dignified and adorned before; and these satisfactory and flattering testimonies of regard were continued in his subsequent appearance in the character of Hamlet, and during his performance of all

the principal characters he was accustomed to represent.*

Notwithstanding this brilliant success, Mr. Sheridan, having received two lessons on the instability of public favour, began to turn his thoughts seriously to literature: a resource for which his education and talents eminently qualified him. From this time, although he did not quit the stage, he may be considered in the additional character of a man of letters. Under this point of view, the number and importance of the works he executed, and the solid benefit of which they were productive to his family and the public, are the best evidences of the strength and versatility of his mind, and prove how much can be accomplished by a single and

* Such was the tumultuous joy expressed by his countrymen on Mr. Sheridan's return, that the historian of the theatre, in reviewing the transaction, makes use of the curious comparison of "a quarrel between lovers."

"Mr. Sheridan's abilities as an actor (he continues) must be fully proved by the success that attended his twelve years' performances in that improved theatre, of which he was the constant and chief support."

unassisted individual, who carries to his task a spirit of unwearied activity, and a determination to improve every passing hour.

While these double duties engaged her husband's thoughts and time, that of Mrs. Sheridan was chiefly spent in a small retreat at Glasnevin, where she could enjoy with her children the advantage of breathing a purer air than in Dublin, and devote herself unremittingly to their improvement.

The winter of 1757 was to Mr. Sheridan as successful as the preceding one; but afterwards, the erection of the new theatre in Crow-street, under the auspices of Spranger Barry, and the loss of some of Mr. Sheridan's best performers, rendered it no longer desirable for him to continue in the management. Fashion, which had formerly so powerfully supported Mr. Sheridan, had now gone over to the side of Barry.

To the finest figure and most interesting countenance, this performer united the magic of that fascinating voice, which obtained for

him the name of "the silver-toned Barry." In parts of tenderness and pathos—in such characters as Jaffier, Mark Antony, or Varanes—he was unrivalled: and that latter character in which he inspired such a powerful interest, has not been able since his time to maintain its place on the stage. The same qualities followed him into private life. Destitute of principle, but gifted with such powers of pleasing, Spranger Barry was a man of whom it might be said, that, "whomsoever he chose he could subdue, and he chose to subdue every one."

When the affairs of his theatre took an unfavourable turn, and, unlike Mr. Sheridan, he left every department unpaid and unsatisfied, the angry tradesmen used to besiege his door, vowing that though they had been frequently paid off with words, *this* time they would not depart without their money. Mr. Barry would then desire to see them. A single claimant was admitted at a time. After a conference of some duration, he returned with a pleased

and satisfied countenance to the anxious and expectant crowd of creditors below. Judging by the reception their companion met what was likely to be their own chance, he was eagerly interrogated by the gaping crowd. "Well, you have seen Mr. Barry?"—"Yes."—"You have got your money?"—"No."—"A part of it?"—"Not one shilling.—But Mr. Barry spoke to me so kindly—seemed so distrest to keep me waiting—promised me *so faithfully* that *the next time I called* the money should be forthcoming—that he has, I know not how, got the better of my anger, and I could not find it in my heart to press a gentleman any further."

If Barry was so successful in exercising his powers of persuasion on the flinty hearts of angry creditors, with the gentler sex he was, of course, still more irresistible; and though we have such high authority as the Letters of the celebrated Mrs. Montagu, that "notwithstanding Barry's sentimental blue eyes, it always appeared to her that he looked like a fool;" it

was far from being the most usual impression that he made.*

* Towards the close of the year 1758, and the beginning of 1759, Barry, after Mr. Sheridan's departure, hit upon the following expedient to oppose the benefits of the other house. The same night on which there was to be the benefit of a performer at the opposite house, Barry used to apply to some female leader of the *Ton*, and request her to bespeak a play, making an interest for all parts of the house, but more particularly with her tradesmen, for the pit and gallery. In these negociations, his fine person and insinuating manners generally rendered him successful.

On one of these occasions, the great lady of the night had, as was usual, sent out pit and gallery tickets to all her tradespeople, with threatenings of the loss of her custom if they did not dispose of them. On arriving early in the box-room to receive her company, great was her mortification to be informed that her orders had been very ill obeyed, and that it was likely to prove but a thin house. The time approached for the drawing up of the curtain, and at the sight of a thin pit and gallery, the lady was so much affected, that she was ready to faint. Smelling-bottles and other restoratives were applied, and as soon as her Ladyship recovered the power of speech, she cried out "that she was ruined and undone; that she should never be able to look *dear Mr. Barry* in the face again. after such a shocking disappointment."

At

To return to Mrs. Sheridan. Neither the disappointment of her own and her husband's hopes, nor the anxieties with which her future

At these repeated lamentations, the box-keeper advanced and said: "I beg your Ladyship will not be so disheartened; indeed, your Ladyship's house will mend, your Ladyship's galleries will certainly mend before the play begins."

"Nonsense!" cried the lady; "I tell you I am undone—ruined and undone, that's all! But I'll be revenged! I am resolved I'll pay off—no; I mean I'll turn off all my saucy tradesmen to-morrow morning."

Barry was then in his prime; being scarcely turned of forty. As a contrast to the preceding anecdote, view him as he was seen in London by Mrs. H. Lefanu, in 1775, broken down by infirmity more than by years, for repeated and severe attacks of rheumatism had deprived his once fine and lofty figure of all its elasticity and grace. A chair, placed at the side scene, was in readiness to receive the exhausted actor the moment he went off the stage, and the part he happened to perform that night was in unison with the ruin Time had effected, for it was that of "Lear."

In the last scene of the fifth act, after snatching a sword from the officer, and striking down the two ruffians who had attempted to seize upon Cordelia, the King says to one of his knights who is relating the deed to Edgar:

lot was environed, could damp the ardour of her benevolence, or the eagerness with which her kind heart embraced every opportunity of obliging and benefiting others.

At this time Mr. Samuel Whyte, of Grafton Street (so often mentioned in the "Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan"), was opening his grammar-school, and Mrs. Sheridan exerted herself in every way to promote his interest. This gentleman, who was eight years younger than Mrs. Sheridan, had always been treated by her with a kindness which he was far from

"Did I not, fellow?
I've seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I could have made them skip; *I am old now*,
And these vile crosses spoil me; out of breath,
Fie, oh! quite out of breath, and spent!"

As the aged and infirm actor uttered the words, "*I am old now*," some one among the spectators, equally devoid of good taste and good feeling, began a laugh, in which he was joined by the unthinking part of the audience.

Mr. Sheridan was present with his daughter in the boxes, and could not refrain from an almost audible expression of generous indignation.

experiencing from her sister, Mrs. Fish, or any other member of the family. In order to promote the success of the undertaking, Mrs. Sheridan sent her own three children (the eldest not seven), and prevailed on her husband's sisters, Mrs. Sheen, Mrs. Knowles, and also her friend Mrs. Cunningham, whom I have formerly mentioned, and others, to send theirs. Thus favoured, young Whyte had a handsome show of pupils on first opening his school: but the children of Mr. Sheridan were soon obliged to be withdrawn, on account of the change in their arrangements, which caused their removal to England. On this occasion, Charles Francis accompanied his parents; and it not being possible, from the situation of Mr. Sheridan's affairs at that time, to take all the children, Richard Brinsley and Alicia were left with their nurse, under the superintendance of a relation (William Sheridan), at Quilca. After a time it was thought advisable to remove them to Dublin, where they lived in their father's house, under the care of their aunt Mrs. Knowles,

who with her husband resided there. They went as day-scholars to Mr. Whyte's; and afterwards, on account of the inconvenient distance between Mr. Sheridan's house and Whyte's, became boarders.*

* Thus it appears they were not left "in the care of Mr. Whyte."—Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, vol. i, p. 103.

As this gentleman is quoted in the preface to Dr. Watkins's "Memoirs," as the sole authority by "whose suggestion, and by virtue of whose communications the history of Mr. Sheridan and his family was originally projected," it is fair to state the relationship in which he stood with regard to them, and also the opportunities he had of knowledge with respect to the late Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

The late Mr. Whyte's father was Solomon Whyte, uncle to Mrs. Sheridan; and from thence Whyte had certainly a right to expect, and even solicit, but not to demand the kindness she invariably shewed him: for had he possessed any legal title to the name, the estates of Solomon Whyte could not have gone, as they did, to Mr. Richard Chamberlaine, Mrs. Sheridan's elder brother.

Mr. Whyte, who was left but slenderly provided for, went to Dublin to adopt some plan for his future support. How warmly his kind friend exerted herself for him on this occasion,

On the removal of Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan to London in 1758, they settled in Henrietta

occasion, has been acknowledged by his family, where it is said—

" He still bore in mind the obligations he owed to Mrs Sheridan, *who was the friend and parent of his youth.*"—Whyte's Miscellanies.

By the advice and with the assistance of Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Whyte opened a school, where teaching English grammatically was the principal object.

About a year and a half after their removal to England, Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan sent for their children; and from that period Mr. Whyte never had any intercourse with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was at the time of leaving his school little more than seven years of age.

In page 158 of the Memoirs, it is said, " When Mrs. Sheridan committed *her sons* to the care of *her cousin*, she recommended to him the exercise of *patience* in his arduous profession; and observed, that she had brought him *subjects* for the trial of that virtue: " for *these boys*," continued she, " will be your tutors in this respect. I have been their only instructor, and they have sufficiently exercised *mine:* for *two such impenetrable dunces* I never met with."

Now " *these boys*," that were to exercise the patience of Mr. Samuel Whyte, " *her cousin*," were Richard Brinsley

Street, Covent Garden: where Mrs. Sheridan's agreeable qualities and conversation soon drew around her an ingenious and distinguished circle of friends, among whom might be reckoned Dr. Young, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Whately, General Frazer, Mr. Archibald Frazer, Mr. Wedderburne, afterwards Lord Loughborough, Lord Shelburne, Mrs. Cholmondeley, Mrs. Peckhard, and Samuel Richardson. With Richardson, to whom she had been first introduced in Huntingdonshire, Mrs. Sheridan had frequent opportunities of conversing, both at her own house and at Parson's Green: and it was in consequence

and Alicia, afterwards Mrs. Lefanu, of Dublin: for Charles Francis, as we have already seen, accompanied his parents whithersoever they went. It is unlucky that this single fact overthrows the whole story, and renders unnecessary the concluding inference:

"At this time the subject of these memoirs was in his seventh year. *And though the remark of the mother was not confirmed by subsequent evidence of an incapacity for learning*, the story is at least a *proof* of constitutional indolence."—Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable R. B. Sheridan, by Dr. Watkins.

of the admiration he expressed upon the perusal of her manuscript novel, Eugenia and Adelaide, that she was first encouraged to try her powers in a work of higher importance and greater length.

While fortune smiled, Mrs. Sheridan had felt no inclination to court the favour of the public as a writer, and cheerfully sacrificed the gratification of vanity, which she might have obtained as the possessor of distinguished talents, to the duties and avocations to which, as a wife and a mother, she was more particularly called to attend. But on a reverse of circumstances, she could not but have felt pleasure on finding the riches and resources of her mind readily acknowledged and justly appreciated by Mr. Richardson, who at that time deservedly stood at the head of that species of literature he may be said to have almost created.

All her husband's friends Mrs. Sheridan welcomed with sincerity to her plain table, and, not having a particle of vanity or false pride in her

disposition, cheerfully accommodated herself to the alteration in her husband's circumstances, even to the personal superintendance of every minutiæ of housewifery: and to those who deem the cultivation of literature incompatible with the duties more exclusively appropriated to the female sex, it may not be uninstructive to remark, that the authoress of some of the most admired productions of her time, was also acknowledged to excel in every branch of domestic economy.

While residing in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, Mrs. Sheridan gave birth to a daughter, the last of her children, and the only one of them born in England. This daughter was baptized by the names of Anne Elizabeth. The former name was given in compliment to Anne, daughter of Samuel Richardson, afterwards married to Mr. Ditcher, surgeon of Bath. The Rev. Dr. Markham, afterwards Archbishop of York, stood godfather to this child of Mrs. Sheridan's. At the period of its birth, Mrs. She-

ridan had, with her, Miss Pennington, a young lady who had conceived for her, some time before, a strong and lasting attachment. She was the daugher of Lady Pennington, author of a volume of letters on the subject of Education; but was at this time her own mistress, and possessed of a considerable fortune. The introduction, which first took place in the country, was followed up by a lively and mutual tenderness, which at first proved to Mrs. Sheridan a source of exquisite pleasure, and afterwards of unavailing regret.

The female heart, when devoted to conjugal affection, is sometimes observed to be comparatively cold to other claims: but Mrs. Sheridan formed an exception to this remark, and possessed a warmth and kindliness of manner, particularly calculated for inspiring and requiting friendship.*

* With what energy does she express this sentiment in the following passage of "Sidney Biddulph!"

"I have regretted nothing so much in my absence from Arnold Abbey as the being cut off from the hope of seeing my

When Mrs. Sheridan settled in London, Miss Pennington followed her thither, and introduced herself in a manner that precluded all denial. She said, "I am come to take up my abode with you, for I find it impossible to live without you. You may shut your doors against me, but otherwise you will find it impossible to get rid of me." Mrs. Sheridan accepted, with a return of affection equal to her own, the advances of this amiable, warm-hearted being, who thus gave herself to her friend; and from that moment they occupied one house, as before they had shared the same inclinations, tastes, and wishes. Sweet promise of a compensation, that was to console Mrs. Sheridan for the afflictions and privations she had hitherto under-

my amiable Mrs. Vere. We can have but *one friend* to share our heart, to whom we have no reserve, *and whose loss is irreparable;* but I perceive the absence of a pleasing acquaintance, whose society is no further necessary than as it contributes to enliven solitude, and gets a preference to others, merely by comparison. Still this is a loss easily supplied, as I find by experience. There are Mrs. Veres every where; but, alas! there is but *one* Cecilia!"

gone! Little did she foresee how soon it was to be blasted.

Miss Pennington's health being attacked, she became desirous of visiting Bath; and Mrs. Sheridan (now become her inseparable friend) accompanied her thither. This was on Miss Pennington's part a fatal step: for, her complaints being of a feverish nature, the waters were totally unsuited to her case. She soon experienced the ill consequences of having made the trial, and returned with Mrs. Sheridan to London, in a worse state of health than she left it. She lingered some time, during which Mrs. Sheridan attended her with fond but unavailing affection. Miss Pennington died in the arms of her friend, who never, during the few remaining years of her short but valuable life, lost the remembrance of her virtues.

During her life-time Miss Pennington had expressed an intention of benefiting the child Anne Elizabeth, who was born while she was with Mrs. Sheridan: but not foreseeing her end was so near, she left no testamentary notice of

her wishes upon this subject. Would it had been the only instance of ill-fortune *that* daughter had to experience! Miss Pennington dying under Mrs. Sheridan's roof, her heirs made a visit, in order to receive such plate and other valuables as their deceased relative might have had in use while living with her friend. At the same time, as a testimony of their sense of Mrs. Sheridan's affectionate and unremitting attentions, they requested her to select, from among the property left behind, *a piece of plate*, to keep as a memorial of her. Mrs. Sheridan, with the high-minded simplicity and disinterestedness of grief, yet adhering to the request to the letter, made choice of Miss Pennington's thimble—a selection in which the heirs rigidly acquiesced! After Mrs. Sheridan's death, another memorial of her lamented friend was found among her property: it was a crystal heart surrounded with golden rays, and enclosing a lock of hair. Within the paper which enfolded it were inscribed the

words "Poor Penny's hair." And beneath them this couplet from Pope—

> "Oh, name for ever sad! for ever dear!
> Still breath'd in sighs, still usher'd with a tear."

Not to break in upon the narration of this interesting part of Mrs. Sheridan's life, I have postponed the mention of two acquaintances which must be dated from her ill-starred journey to Bath. The one was Mrs. Scott, sister to Mrs. Montagu: a woman of very uncommon abilities, and, though now less generally known, a much more voluminous writer than her brilliant and celebrated sister.

This lady, who married George Lewis Scott, Member of the Royal Society, and Sub-preceptor for the Latin language to his late Majesty, is described as an excellent historian, and a woman of great acquirements, extraordinary memory, and strong sense. In every relation of life a person of exemplary conduct, of sound principles, enlivened by the warmest sense of religion, and of a charity so unbounded, so totally regardless of herself, as to be almost excessive

and indiscriminate. Yet all these perfections were, it seems, insufficient to retain the affection of Mr. Scott, from whom she parted early in their marriage, and afterwards lived with her friend Lady Barbara Montagu, sister of Lord Halifax. Her intercourse with the world was various and extensive, and there were few literary people of her day with whom she had not either an acquaintance or a correspondence. With such a companion Mrs. Sheridan must have passed many agreeable hours; and Mr. Sheridan had a singular esteem for this lady. Mrs. Scott is the sister so often mentioned in the Letters of Mrs. Montagu by the affectionately playful name of "Pea," from the great similarity that subsisted between them in their youth. She is said also to have rivalled Mrs. Montagu in epistolary excellence: but she ordered all her letters to be burnt; and burnt works are apt to excite a degree of regret and enthusiasm, which their production might very probably dissipate, as we generally preserve what is worth preserving. Be her epistolary

talents what they might, her numerous publications, both fictitious and historical,* attest at once Mrs. Scott's industry and talent; and perhaps she only required the rays of fortune and fashion, to be as much admired as the brilliant defender of Shakespeare, and antagonist of Voltaire.

Another female historian and novelist of Mrs. Sheridan's acquaintance was Sarah Fielding, well known as the sister of the celebrated Henry Fielding. She occupied a small house situated between Bath and Bath Easton, where Mrs. Sheridan frequently visited her. Her company was much courted, and she spent a good deal of time at the house of Allen, of Prior Park. This man, who by merit and good conduct had, from the humble situation of a

* She was the author of the "History of Gustavus Erricson, King of Sweden, with an introductory History of Sweden, from the middle of the twelfth century." "History of Mecklenburgh;" "Life of Theodore Agrippa D'Aubigné:" "Millenium Hall;" "Agreeable Ugliness, or Triumph of the Graces!" &c. &c. &c.

postboy, raised himself to be the possessor of an estate and noble fortune, the "Allworthy" of Fielding's most celebrated novel, highly valued Sarah Fielding's acquirements and agreeable conversation, and allowed her a small annuity: but, by a strange neglect or inattention, he forgot to continue it to her by bequest in his will; so that at his decease she was exposed to serious inconvenience. This conduct towards persons in very narrow circumstances, renders the previous bounty rather a disadvantage on the contrary, by accustoming the receivers to look forward to a regular resource, which, if suddenly cut off, may leave them without the means of satisfying demands, incurred in the full confidence of its continuance. But though attracted both by the love and reciprocity of talent, wherever she chanced to meet it, Mrs. Sheridan never forgot, that though wit may dazzle, yet esteem is only due to benevolence of heart and purity of mind. Wherever *those* existed, it required neither depth of acquirement nor brilliancy of intellect to attract her

favourable notice. She " bore her faculties so meekly" that even after establishing her pretensions to literary talent, she continued (contrary to what is usually the case) a favourite with her own sex. No caustic raillery, or concealed ridicule was to be feared, by the less gifted female, from her lips, or from her pen. Her power of inspiring confidence and regard in the most uncultivated, was remarkable; and many a warm and unsophisticated heart, to whose complaints she had listened, and whose domestic sorrows she had soothed with patient sweetness, bore grateful witness to her survivors, that the admiration and popularity which was soon to follow Mrs. Sheridan, never superseded the virtues which are peculiar to her sex, and which rendered her a model, whether considered as a wife, a mother, or a friend.

After Miss Pennington's death, Mrs. Sheridan removed to Windsor, which change of scene must have proved very beneficial to her spirits.

Her attention was still further called off from

melancholy recollections by the arrival of her two children, Richard and Alicia.*

Being thus settled in an agreeable retreat, and surrounded by the objects of her most affectionate solicitude, Mrs. Sheridan seems to have enjoyed a short respite from affliction, and to have matured her literary plans. Her heart had been tried by every species of calamity, yet after the first shock was past, instead of sinking under spirits overclouded with despondency, the fertility of her active fancy and the

* Or "the boys," as Dr. Watkins calls them: – again, page 103, the death of Miss Pennington is mentioned as "an inducement" to Mrs. Sheridan, "to send for her children;" as if, but for that circumstance, she might not have thought of them. As the Biographer has, in general, done justice to Mrs. Sheridan's character, a justice which it is to be wished he had extended to that of her husband, it is the more necessary to remove any prejudice this passage might unintentionally create.

The fact was, the sending for her children bore no reference to Miss Pennington's death; but was a step suggested by the maternal affection of Mrs. Sheridan, the moment the state of her husband's affairs put it in her power.

buoyancy of her pure and exalted mind rose brighter than in the happiest days of her prosperity.

"We have had a sufficient share of disappointments" (she says, in a letter that bears the date of this year) "patience, courage, and industry, however, will surmount every thing."

Mr. Sheridan was also strenuously employed upon bringing to perfection his system of English Elocution, at the same time that his theatrical success was such as to alarm even Garrick on his throne.

I am sorry that the biographer of his son seems to be actuated by an invariable prejudice against Mr. T. Sheridan, in every relation which he gives of his disputes with the theatrical ruler of the day.

Not to advert to other passages in the "Memoirs," in which Mr. Sheridan is accused of depreciating Garrick's genius, and selecting characters with an invidious design to outshine him, a species of conduct which Mr. Sheridan's

spirit ever was above, we shall only notice the following passage :—

" In the theatrical season of 1760, Mr. Sheridan engaged to play at Drury-lane, where he sometimes performed in the same piece with Garrick, whose jealousy, it is said, was excited by the popularity which his rival obtained, particularly in the character of King John. That play, we are told, was in consequence laid aside by the manager, who could by no means be induced to renew it, even when he knew that it was a favourite piece with his present" (*now his late*) " Majesty, who had been pleased to speak highly of Sheridan's representation of the principal character. This, however, must be considered as an apocryphal tale; for let the feelings of Garrick be what they would, it is scarcely within the limits of probability that he would venture to suppress what the new sovereign admired."—*Watkins's Memoirs*, p. 105.

Why is it not within the limits of probability that a stop should be put to the progress of a rival in royal approbation, by a man who has

been thus characterized by Arthur Murphy, his contemporary, a popular and successful dramatic writer, and one who certainly, whatever temporary vexations Garrick might have caused him, had not so much reason to complain of his conduct as Mr. Sheridan.

" The misfortune of Garrick was, that he never had due confidence in his own talents. His love of fame was unbounded, but it was tremblingly alive all o'er. He lived in a whispering gallery, always listening and anxious about himself. Upon such a disposition, they who lacquied after him could make what impression they pleased. A word was sufficient. He took fire at the slightest hint; and they, who had sinister purposes to answer, saw the avenues, by which they were to approach him.

" By the arts of such men, he, who might always have been at ease, and who, by his talents deserved to be so, was ever involved in little disputes and jealousies that made him unhappy through life."*

* Preface to Murphy's Works.

This character is completely confirmed by his Biographer and admirer Davies, from whose work numerous passages might be cited, in which he admits that the great abilities of Garrick did not exempt him from jealousy and envy.

Now to a man thus "tremblingly alive all o'er" to fame, who lived thus "in a whispering gallery," we may conceive what must be the effect of the royal approbation of King John, which part Mr. Sheridan undertook at Garrick's own request, under the following circumstances. In the theatrical phrase, the play was *cast* for Garrick to perform the character of King John, and Mr. Sheridan Faulconbridge. Before the representation, however, Garrick came to Sheridan and said, "I don't know what to do with this character of King John. It is a heavy declamatory part, not at all in my way —I am sure you could make a great deal more of it, and you would greatly oblige me by exchanging characters" To this Mr. Sheridan was very averse; but by the continued solici-

tation of the manager, he was prevailed on at length to take the part of King John, of which "he made so much" that the play was acted several nights successively with great applause, and being honoured by a command, it was reported the next day that the King had mentioned Mr. Sheridan's performance, in terms of the highest approbation, at the Levee. To this Garrick listened with evident impatience and uneasiness, and at length interrupted his informant with "Eh, eh! and what did he say of Faulconbridge?" To this his acquaintance could only reply that the King said, "He did not like the character."

Such a mortification it was beyond the irritable sensibility of Garrick to endure. His resolution was formed in an instant, and though the boxes were taken for King John several nights successively, he would never afterwards permit the play to be acted.

Such is the real account (in every material particular confirmed by Davies the Biographer of Garrick) of this theatrical transaction.

Davies was certainly no way partial to Mr. Sheridan, nor disposed to exalt his merit by unduly depreciating that of Garrick. Yet, in another place, he justly observes, that "admirably suited as the flexibility of Garrick's powers was to all the various passions of the human heart, his voice wanted that fulness of sound requisite to the delivery of a long declamatory speech, or to give force and dignity to mere sentiment."

But in considering King John as a merely declamatory part, Garrick forgot the opportunity afforded for the display of conflicting passions in the scene with Hubert in the third act, an opportunity so admirably improved by Mr. Sheridan, that even Churchill in his Rosciad could not withhold from him his warmest approbation. The dying scene in the last act was also allowed in the performance to be the masterpiece of Sheridan, as in the writing it is the masterpiece of Shakespeare. There is nothing similar to it in the Drama, except, perhaps, the "Valentinian" of Fletcher; and *there*

the bad effect of that exaggerating principle is perceptible, by which, in endeavouring to increase a thousand-fold the sufferings of the dying monarch, and thus by dint of words to outdo the great model left him by Shakespeare, Fletcher, instead of surpassing him, falls far below the power of his simple but great original.

When Mr. Sheridan performed King John in Ireland, some old ladies observed, " that in the dying scene it was quite prophane of him to imitate Nature so exactly."*

* Notwithstanding Mrs. Inchbald's *histrionic doubts,* according to the concurrent testimony of all his contemporaries, the theatrical talents of Garrick were wonderful, his literary powers respectable, and he was certainly possessed of many private virtues. But let us not for that reason be unjust to the memory of a man, whom many opposed to him as his rival in talent, and who certainly surpassed him in moral worth, and open, manly firmness and sincerity of character. Davies himself says, " Mr. Sheridan had been long esteemed a man of eminence in his profession," and adds that critics did not scruple to compare, nay prefer, Sheridan's performance of Richard, Hamlet, and Macbeth, to

Dr. Watkins adds: "But in reality the reason for suspending the performance of King

to the other's utmost efforts in those parts: he then continues, "but indeed the Manager's own jealousy justified the public good opinion of Mr. Sheridan's ability; but Garrick's ruling passion was the love of fame; and his uneasiness, arising from the success of Sheridan, began every day to be more and more visible." Notwithstanding his nice critical taste and extensive theatrical experience, Garrick was sometimes liable to be mistaken, and sometimes influenced by jealousy to keep out of public view the merits of even female performers. He assured the celebrated Mrs. Barry that she had no genius for Tragedy, and advised her as a friend to give up all thoughts of the stage as a profession. Returning home, much dispirited, in consequence of this decision, Mrs. Barry accidentally communicated it to Mr. Whately, who proposed taking her to Mr. Sheridan to have his unbiassed opinion. Mr. Sheridan immediately perceived that she possessed tragic powers of the first order, but that she wanted confidence in herself and usage of the stage. He therefore strongly advised her to practise in the country, before she ventured again to encounter the critical audience of a metropolis; after which he entertained no doubt of her ultimate success. Mrs. Barry profited by his advice, and eventfully justified his prediction, as she afterwards became one of the most brilliant ornaments of the stage.

John, was one of a very different kind, and in which the interests of Sheridan were principally consulted. This was the introduction of the tragedy of the Earl of Essex, written by Mr. Henry Brooke,* and originally brought out with some alterations on the Dublin stage by Mr. Sheridan, who then represented the capital character with great applause."

Now the fact is, it was written by Banks, altered by Brooke, and finally retouched by Mr. Sheridan. The celebrated Bucentaur does not appear to have gone through a greater number of reparations than this tragedy. It was originally written by Banks, and entitled "The Unhappy Favorite." The situations being affecting, but the language a strange mixture of meanness and bombast, it was altered by a Mr. James Ralph, and new-named "The Fall of Essex." Being deemed capable of still further improvement, the whole was composed anew by Jones and Brooke, and denominated "The Earl of Essex," which name, it is to be

* Author of the Fool of Quality.

hoped, it will be permitted to retain. Mr. Brooke attended chiefly to the improvement of the *situations* of the play, and Jones to the harmony of the *language*. Mr. Brooke's alteration was the one adopted by Mr. Sheridan (who was his cousin); and old Benjamin Victor thus writes of it in his inimitable phraseology:

"The tragedy of the Earl of Essex, new-written by Mr. Brooke, was brought to the stage and performed with great applause. The plan of the first author, Banks, being universally approved, was preserved by Mr. Brooke, who made no alteration, but in the last act where Essex and Southampton are going to execution, *which proved an agreeable incident.*"

To return to the literary employments of Mrs. Sheridan. Although in composing the novel of "Sidney Biddulph," she considered Richardson as her master, she had the good sense and judgment to be conscious of his defects; and, observing upon the unreasonable length of his productions, made this poignant remark—that

" In the novels of Richardson, the Bookseller got the better of the Author."

As nothing is more uncertain than literary success, Mrs. Sheridan, unwilling that any hopes raised in the partial mind of her husband from the merit of the progressive work, should be blighted, did not communicate any portion of it to him, either by reading or conversation, till the whole was completed.

It was her custom to write with a small trunk or chest placed beside her, into which she put her manuscript, if Mr. Sheridan chanced to enter the room while she was thus employed.

He knew that she was engaged on a work from which she expected benefit to her family; but as Mrs. Sheridan forbore to explain it, he avoided on his part making any enquiries: so that he was literally ignorant of the subject of the work until it was brought to a conclusion.

CHAPTER V.

Sidney Biddulph—Successful in France.—Abbé Prévost—Dramatized in France.—L'Habitant de la Guadaloupe.—Curious Note annexed to the French edition of Sidney Biddulph.—Different Judgments passed upon it.—Dr. Johnson.—Mrs. Barbauld.—Dr. Parr.—Mr. Fox.—Critique on Sidney Biddulph.—Smollett.—Sidney presented under a new point of View.—A Work of Humour as well as Pathos.—Selections from Sidney Biddulph.

At length the doubts and fears of the author were dispelled in a manner the most flattering to her feelings. The "Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph" were published, March 1761, and the book became an immediate and permanent favourite.

Notwithstanding the high praise bestowed by Richardson on her "Eugenia and Adelaïde," it is but justice to observe, that bright and auspicious dawn of fame scarcely taught her to expect the full and steady radiance which afterwards distinguished her meridian celebrity.

In that juvenile performance, "Love, only

Love," inspired the rich, romantic page, whether it dwelt upon the fully delineated sufferings of Adelaïde and Eugenia, or the episodical sketches of Clara and Raphael, Cynthia, Violante, and Isidore. Though the adventures and surprises were varied and interesting, the moral improvement was not proportionably great.

In Sidney Biddulph, the offspring of her maturer years, on the contrary, Love was reduced to his subordinate place, and made subservient to the triumph of wedded constancy, and the exercise of the domestic duties and affections.

The reception of her novel in France was equally gratifying to the feelings of Mrs. Sheridan. A translation immediately appeared under the title of " Mémoires d'une Jeune Dame," by the Abbé Prévost, the translator of Richardson's works, and author of " Cleveland," and several other interesting and popular performances. This faithful and elegant version the Abbé transmitted to Mrs. Sheridan, accompanied

by a letter conceived in terms the most highly complimentary.*

A part of Sidney Biddulph was also brought upon the stage. The story was taken from the passage describing the unexpected return of Warner, the West Indian, and the piece was entitled "L'Habitant de la Guadeloupe." The adaptation was very successful, and became as popular in France as the Opera taken from "Tom Jones," or "Tome Jaune," to accommodate it to the rules of gallic orthoepy.

In England, though it has at length been in some measure superseded by more modern favourites, "Sidney Biddulph" continued for a succession of years to be read and admired by all persons of true taste; among the number of those who have expressed themselves in the

* In this translation a curious note occurs. In describing the inhospitable reception she met with at Lady Sarah Biddulph's, Sidney mentions waiting in a room which "having been *newly washed*, felt extremely cold." Upon this circumstance the editor remarks, "according to the *detestable* custom of the English."

highest terms upon its merits, I need only adduce the illustrious names of the late Charles James Fox and Dr. Samuel Parr.

Among Mrs. Sheridan's contemporaries, none admired her novel more warmly than Dr. Johnson, whose compliment to her upon its publication has been more frequently repeated than any other. "I know not, Madam! that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much."*

This compliment of Dr. Johnson's was first given by Mr. Boswell, in his "Life" of that great man, and afterwards recorded, without variation or addition, by Mrs. Barbauld in her "Life and Correspondence of Samuel Richardson."

It is to be regretted, that a lady of Mrs. Barbauld's taste, and unquestionable discrimi-

* Perhaps the Doctor had in his mind the well-known story of the Greek poet, Phrynichus, who was *fined* by the sensitive Athenians for exhibiting before them a tragedy which affected them too much. They would have shewn more true feeling, by remitting the fine to the poor poet!

nation, should not have qualified it by some additional remark on a work so diversified as "Sidney Biddulph."

As it stands, the observation of Dr. Johnson includes but half its praise, and might convey to the minds of some readers an erroneous impression; for the fact is, that *humour*, as well as *pathos*, forms a leading quality in the novel of "Sidney Biddulph." Before I conclude the subject, I shall add one or two extracts from the work in confirmation of this remark.

An old master of the art* has aptly defined a novel to be "a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of a uniform plan and general concurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient." He adds—

"But this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success, without a principal person to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth,

* Smollett.

and at last close the scene by virtue of his own importance."

If this definition be admitted to be correct, "Sidney Biddulph" may, without fear of contradiction, be pronounced to afford one of the best specimens of a well-written novel—the fable faultless—the incidents well prepared—the characters all conducive to the catastrophe—and even the hero himself a personage of some importance to the plot.

Orlando Faulkland, in addition to all those qualities which most interest and please, possesses that rarest attribute of heroes and heroines, either in or out of books, a fund of humour and entertainment. This greatly increases the sympathy he inspires, when that fine mind is for ever overclouded by calamity.

The only defects of Faulkland's character are, a warm impetuosity of feeling, and an imprudent hastiness of temper, the consequences of which he has reason to deplore to the latest period of his existence.

Mrs. Sheridan's novel is not (like many otherwise excellent compositions) an entertaining gallery of portraits, but of portraits to which the painter has assigned little employment, or at best a forced one. *Her* figures, on the contrary, are exhibited each in the attitude in which their predominant humour and character would most naturally place them, and which is best calculated to elucidate the progress of the story.

Thus, in the character of Lady Biddulph, the heroine's mother, her peculiar prejudices and modes of thinking, are not only very effectively described and accounted for in themselves, but they *bear upon* the story in a manner the most important, as, "had "she" been less stern," she would have read, or listened to Faulkland's justification, and all the miseries occasioned by her well-meaning, but provoking obstinacy, would have been prevented.

While the few foibles of Lady Biddulph occasion, sometimes amusement, and sometimes regret, the sterling virtues of her heart com-

mand unmingled praise. We discern the superior penetration and latent playfulness of Sidney's mind, leading her sometimes to indulge in a smile at the unconquerable prejudices of her "dear literal parent," but at the same time chastised by that reverential awe and filial deference, which at the time in which the events are supposed to take place,* formed the first principle inculcated in female education.

The character of Sidney Biddulph, the heroine, is one unfortunately almost forgotten in the regions of romance—That of a woman, young, beautiful, and engaging, of a disposition equally removed from the extremes of levity or austerity—amiable without artifice, virtuous without prudery, and pious without pretension. Sidney is neither a bigot nor a freethinker, neither insipid nor volatile. She is no female philosopher, who could find in science or study a compensation for the disappointment of the finest affections of her heart; neither is she a tall, pale, gigantic heroine, full

* About the beginning of Queen Anne's reign.

six feet high, without her stilts, whose lofty person is an emblem of her loftier mind, and each of whose maxims deserves to become a universal aphorism. In one word, she is—reader, have you lately met with such a one?—*unaffected.*

Simple, artless, and unpretending,

> "She frowns *no* goddess, and she moves *no* queen."

Yet she is highly informed, possesses a cultivated mind, and rich intellectual resources. Sidney introduces herself to the reader with native cheerfulness, the result of innocence, and tender sensibilities, corrected by delicacy. We enjoy, *with* her, the few and brief hours of happiness allotted to her, and sympathize with equal warmth in the unmerited afflictions that succeed them.

The character of her brother, Sir George Biddulph, is so well delineated by the author, that it would be impossible to add a word to it without injury.

"Sir George Biddulph was nine or ten

years older than his sister. He was a man of a good understanding, moral as to his general conduct, but void of any of those refined sentiments which constitute what is called *delicacy*. Pride is sometimes accounted laudable; that which Sir George possessed (for he had pride) was not of this kind."

And again, in the second part, "Sir George is rather apt to overdo every thing, *and would exert as much force to remove a feather, as to lift an anchor.*"

The character of Lady Sarah Biddulph, his wife, is drawn with much humour and spirit; and her little paltry meannesses contrast well with the more lofty and overbearing character of her lord.

The religious sentiments interspersed throughout the work, breathe a strain of piety so fervent and sincere, that they cannot fail to excite a responsive sympathy in every serious mind.

The incidents and sudden turns of fortune are so various and surprising, that it is impos-

sible for the reader, the most practised in that style of composition, to foresee or calculate upon them; at the same time, every step, every event is prepared and accounted for, in a manner so natural, that it is difficult to resist the illusion which frequently recurs, that we are reading a real history.

The interest never flags a moment, but on the contrary goes on rising, with the force of dramatic composition, to the closing scenes, which should be read in solitude, and with the door locked to prevent interruption; for the mind hangs suspended in breathless anxiety upon the catastrophe, which is worked up with that strong, increasing, deepening, nervously agitating interest, that affords to the novel reader the most delightful exercise of the feelings of sympathy and curiosity.

And this effect is produced without any elaborate effort, any over-strained endeavours to rouse the passions.

There has of late subsisted among writers of fiction, a kind of emulation *which* shall outdo

his predecessor in terrifying and heart-rending delineations. So they can

"On horror's head horrors accumulate,"

they think they have an undoubted right to reign triumphant over the feelings of the reader, and we are at every moment reminded of the observation of Napoleon—

"Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas."

No such exaggeration takes place in the conduct of the closing scene of the first part of "Sidney Biddulph."

To compare it with the "Veil" of the Grecian painter, would be a similitude too trite and obvious; although such a comparison must occur to the mind of every reader of taste. *This* axiom in criticism, the prudent forbearance of the author may at least serve to illustrate—that there is a certain point at which the bounds of terror and pity are—fixed; whenever those bounds are overpast, disgust and horror usurp their place in the mind. The

reader turns shuddering from the spectacle forced upon his view, and both the picture and moral are lost alike in the eager desire to forget. It is before arriving at that point, therefore, that the judicious writer ought to stop—assured that such well-timed reserve, instead of diminishing, will heighten both the practical and poetical effect of the work.

As an old work often possesses something of novelty to young readers, I shall now endeavour, by a brief analysis and a few extracts, to illustrate the foregoing preliminary observations.

The family of Miss Sidney Biddulph is represented as consisting of herself, her mother, a widow lady, and her brother, Sir George Biddulph, who (with his sister) is the only survivor of ten children.

The history (which is carried on journalwise) opens with a description of the joyous reunion in London of these three persons so justly dear to each other, after Sir George Biddulph's absence on account of his health at Spa.

The first dialogue introduces the different

characters of the three personages so happily, and renders so perfectly intelligible all that follows, that I give it as it was given by Sidney to her friend Cecilia.

" I asked Sir George, jocosely, what he had brought me home? He answered, " Perhaps a good husband." My mother caught up the word, " What do you mean, son?"—" I mean, Madam, that there is come over with me a gentleman, with whom I became acquainted in Germany, who of all the men I ever knew, I would wish to have for a brother. If Sidney should fortunately be born under the influence of *uncommonly* good stars, it may happen to be brought about. I can tell you (applying himself to me) he is prepossessed in your favour already; I have shewn him some of your letters, and he thinks you a good sensible girl. I told him you were very well in your person, and that you have had an excellent education." " I hope so," said my mother, looking pleased; " and what have you to tell us of this wonderful man that so surpasses every body?" " Why,

Madam, for *your* part of his character, he is one of the best young men I ever saw. I never knew any body equal to him for sobriety, nor so entirely free from all the vices of youth; as I lived in the same house with him for some months, I had frequent opportunities of making my observations."

"An admirable character, indeed," said my mother. "So thought I too; but I wanted to know a little more of him. Now, Sidney, for your share in the description; I must tell you he is most exquisitely handsome, and extremely sensible."

"Good sense, to be sure, is requisite," said my mother, "but as for beauty, it is but a fading flower at best, and in a man not at all necessary."—"A man is not the worse for it, however," cried my brother.—"No;" my mother answered, "provided it does not make him vain, and too fond of the admiration of giddy girls."—"That, I will be sworn, is not the case of my friend," answered Sir George; "I believe nobody with such a person as his

(if there can be such another) would be so little vain of it; nay, I have heard him declare, that even in a woman he would give the preference to sense and virtue."

"Good young man," cried my mother; "I should like to he acquainted with him."—("So should I," whispered I to my own heart.)

"Well, brother," said I, "you have drawn a good picture; but to make it complete, you must throw in generosity, valour, sweetness of temper, and a great deal of money."—"Fie, my dear, (said my good *literal* parent) a *great deal* is not necessary; a very moderate fortune with such a man is sufficient."

"The good qualities you require in the finishing of my piece," answered my brother, he possesses in an eminent degree—will that satisfy you? As for his fortune, *there*, perhaps, a difficulty may step in: what estate, madam, (to my mother) do you think my sister's fortune may entitle her to?"

"Dear brother," I cried, "pray do not speak in that bargaining way."

My mother answered him very gravely, " your father, you know, left her but four thousand pounds; it is in my power to add a *little* to it, if she marries to please me. Great matters we have no right to expect; but a very good girl, as my daughter is, I think deserves more than a bare equivalent."—" The equality," said my brother, with a demure look, " I fear is out of all proportion here, for the gentlemen I speak of has but—six thousand pounds a year.

He burst out a laughing; it was not good-natured and I was vexed at his joke. My poor mother dropped her countenance; I looked silly, as if I had been disappointed, but I said nothing.

" Then he is above our reach, Sidney," answered my mother.

I made no reply—" Have a good heart, Sid," cried my brother; if my nonpareil likes you, when he sees you, (I felt myself hurt, and grew red) and without a compliment, sister, (seeing me look mortified), I think he will,

fortune will be no objection. I have already told him the utmost of your expectations; he would hardly let me mention the subject. He has a mind for my sister, and if he finds her personal accomplishments answer a brother's (perhaps partial) description, it will be your own fault, if you have not the prettiest fellow in England for your husband."

In this short scene the peculiarities of the three different personages are at once brought into play. The bluntness and want of delicacy of Sir George, the plain literal understanding and maternal affection of Lady Biddulph, and the modest sweetness of Sidney appear in strong contrast.

Sidney further learns from her brother that his friend, who was gone to Bath for a few weeks, had commissioned Sir George to take a house in his own neighbourhood for him, in St. James's Square. "The name of this piece of perfection (she continues) is Faulklank—Orlando Faulkland." Upon cross-examining Sir George, however, it appears that he

is no faultless mirror of insipid excellence. He seems made up of contrarieties.

" Nature," says Sir George, " never formed a temper so gentle, so humane, so benevolent as his; yet when provoked, no tempest is more furious. You would imagine him so humble, that he thinks every one superior to himself; yet through this disguise have I discovered at certain times, a pride which makes him look down on all mankind. With a disposition formed to relish, and a heart attached to the domestic pleasures of life, he is of so enterprizing a temper, that dangers and difficulties rather encourage than dishearten him in the pursuit of a favourite point. His ideas of love, honour, generosity, and gratitude, are so refined, that no hero in romance ever went beyond him. The modesty and affability of his deportment make every body fancy, when he is in company with them, that he is delighted with their conversation; nay, he often affects to be improved and informed; yet there is a sly turn to ridicule in him, which, though

without the least tincture of ill-nature, makes him see and represent things in a light the very opposite of that in which you fancied he saw them. With the nicest discernment when he permits his judgment alone to determine, let passion interfere, and a child can impose on him. Though very handsome, he affects to despise beauty in his own sex; yet is it easy to perceive, by the nice care he takes in his dress, that he does not altogether disregard it in his own person."

At length Orlando arrives. In person, manners, and address, he fully answers to Sir George's description: a description, however, which included strong lights and shades; and which, therefore, prepares the reader for the variety and vicissitudes of his fortune.

We soon find him Sidney's declared lover; and yet Sidney confesses that she has discovered in him some of those little (and they are *but* little) alloys to his many good qualities mentioned by Sir George. "There *is* that sly turn for ridicule which my brother observed in

him; yet, to do him justice, he never employs it but where it is deserved; and then, too, with so much vivacity and good-humour that one cannot be angry with him."

Of this she gives the following lively example.

"We had a good deal of company at dinner with us to-day; amongst the rest young Sayers, who is returned from his travels, as *he* calls it. You remember he went away a good-humoured, inoffensive, quiet fool; he has brought no one ingredient of that character back with him but the last; for such a stiff, conceited, overbearing, talkative, impertinent coxcomb, does not exist. His mother, who, poor woman, you know, made a simpleton of the boy, contributes now all in her power to finish the fop; and she carries him about with her every where for a show. We were assembled in the drawing-room before dinner; in *burst* (for it was not a common entry) master Sayers and his mamma, the cub handing in the old lady; *so* stiff, and *so* awkward, and *so* ungraceful, and so very unlike Mr. Faukland, that I pitied the poor thing, who

thought every body would admire him as much as his mother did. After he had been presented to the ladies (for it was the first time we had seen him since he came home), he took a turn or two about the room to exhibit his person; then applying himself to a picture that hung over the door (a fine landscape of Claude Lorrain, which Mr. Faulkland himself had brought over and given to Sir George), he asked my brother, in a tone scarcely articulate, whether we had any *painters* in England? My mother, who by chance heard him, and by greater chance understood him, answered, before Sir George had time, 'Painters, Sir! yes, sure, and some very good ones too; why you cannot have forgot that; it is not much above a year since you went abroad' (for you must know he had been recalled upon the death of an uncle, who had left him his estate). I observed Mr. Faulkland constrained a sly laugh, on account both of the manner of my mother's taking his question, and her innocently undesigned reprimand. Sayers pretended not to hear her, but looking

through his fingers, as if to throw the picture into perspective, 'that is a pretty good piece,' said he, 'for a copy.' 'Oh!' cried his mother, 'there is no pleasing you; people who have been *abroad* are such connoisseurs in painting!' Nobody making an immediate answer, Mr. Faukland stepped up to Mr. Sayers, and with such a roguish humility in his countenance, that you would have sworn he was a very ignoramus, said 'Are you of opinion, Sir, that that picture is nothing but a copy?' 'Nothing more, take my word for it, Sir. When I was at Rome, there was a Dutchman there who made it his business to take copies *of* copies, which he dispersed, and had people to sell for him in different parts, at pretty good prices; and they did mighty well, for very few people *know* a picture; and I'll answer for it there are not many masters of eminence but what have a hundred originals palmed upon them, more than ever they painted in their lives.'

"Mr. Faulkland then proceeded to ask him abundance of questions, which any one who did

not know him, would have thought he proposed for no other end but a desire of information; and the poor coxcomb Sayers plumed himself upon displaying so much travelled knowledge to a wondering ignorant Englishman, who had never been out of his own country. The company were divided into little chatting parties, as is usual when people are whiling away half an hour before dinner. Mrs. Sayers, my mother, and I, were sitting together on a couch, near enough to hear the conversation that passed between the two gentlemen; at least as much as was not sunk in the affected, half pronounced sentences of Mr. Sayers. His mother, to whom he was the principal object of attention in the company, seemed mightily pleased at the opportunity her son had, from the inquisitiveness of Mr. Faulkland (whom she did not know), of shewing his taste in the polite arts; and often looked about to observe if any body else attended to them. My dear literal mother (as I often call her to you) took every thing seriously, and whispered me, 'how pretty that is,

Sidney! how condescending is Mr. Faulkland! You see he does not make a parade of his *own* knowledge in these matters, but is pleased to reap the benefit of other people's.' I, who saw the latent roguery, could hardly contain myself. Indeed I was amazed at Mr. Faulkland's grave, inquisitive face, and was very glad my mother did not find him out.

" Sayers, elated with having shone so conspicuously (for he observed that both my mother and I attended to his discourse), proceeded to shew away with an immensity of vanity and frothy chat, beginning every new piece of history with, ' when I was at Rome, or when I was at Paris.' At last, unluckily for him, speaking of an incident (which made a good deal of noise, and happened at the first-mentioned place,) in which two English gentlemen had been concerned, he said it was about eleven months ago, just before he left Rome. My mother, who had heard Mr. Faulkland relate the same story, but with some different circumstances, immediately said, ' Mr. Faulkland, have

I not heard you speak of that? you were at Rome yourself when the affair happened; and if I am not mistaken, it was through your interest with Cardinal —— that the business was made up.'

"If a spectre had appeared to poor Sayers, he could not have looked more aghast; he dropped his visage half way down his breast, and for the *first* time speaking very *plain*, and very loud, too, with a stare of astonishment, said, 'have *you* been at Rome, Sir?'—'I was there for a little time,' answered Mr. Faulkland, with real modesty, for he pitied the mortified buzzard; 'and I know the story was *represented* as you have told it; the circumstances differed in a few particulars, but the facts were nearly as you have related them.'

"How obligingly did he reconcile the out-of-countenance Sayers to himself and to the company! 'Were you long abroad, pray Sir?' said the coxcomb. 'About five years, Sir,' answered Mr. Faulkland; 'but I perceive by the conversation I have had the honour of holding with

you to-day, that many accurate and curious observations escaped me, which you made in a much shorter space of time; for the communication of which I think myself extremely obliged to you.' Whether the poor soul thought him serious (as my mother did), I cannot tell; he made a bow, however, for the compliment, but was so lowered that he did not say a word more of Rome or Paris for the rest of the day; and in this we had a double advantage, for as he had nothing else to talk of, his mouth was effectually stopped, except when Mr. Faulkland, out of compassion, asked him (as he often did) such questions as he thought he could answer without exposing his ignorance: for he was contented to have enjoyed it in their *tête-à-tête*, and was far from wishing the company to be witnesses of it.

"I think this little incident may give you some idea of this man's turn. Sir George laughed heartily at it, and said it was *so* like him! My brother loves even his faults, though he will not allow me to call them by that name."

A short, but halcyon interval succeeds, marked only by the further insight Sidney gains into the character of Faulkland: his humanity, generosity, and princely magnificence. At length, in her own phrase, her "probation is over;" the day is fixed for their union, and it is only deferred till all the necessary preliminaries can be adjusted. Just in this glow of felicity, a cloud is thrown over the satisfaction of the lovers by the indisposition of Miss Biddulph. It increases; a cold neglected turns to a fever. All thoughts of marriage are necessarily deferred. For several days her life is in extreme danger. At the end of this eventful interval she thus resumes her journal.

"*July 27.*—After a fortnight, a dreadful fortnight's intermission, I resume my pen. I have often told you, Cecilia, I was not born to be happy. Oh! I prophesied when I said so, though I knew not why I said it.

"I will try to recollect all the circumstances of this miserable interval, and relate them as well as I can. The last line in my journal in-

forms you that I was ill: I was let blood, but my disorder increased, and I was in a high fever before next morning. I remember what my reflections were, and am sure my apprehensions of death were not on my *own* account afflicting, but grievously so at the thoughts of what those should feel whom I was to leave behind.

" My mother and Mr. Faulkland, I believe, chiefly engaged my mind; but I did not continue long capable of reflection. The violence of my disorder deprived me of my senses on the fourth day, and they tell me I raved of Mr. Faulkland. I remember nothing, but that in my intervals of reason I always saw my poor mother in tears by my bed-side. I was in the utmost danger: but it pleased God to restore me to the ardent prayers of my dear parent. In about ten days I began to shew some symptoms of amendment, and inquired how Mr. Faulkland did. My mother answered, 'he is well, my dear, and gone out of town, but I believe will return in a day or two.' 'Gone out of town,' said I, 'and leave me dying! indeed

that was not kind of Mr. Faulkland, and I shall tell him so.' My mother was sitting on the bed-side, and had hold of my hand; my brother was standing with his back to the fire-place: I observed they looked at one another, but neither made me any answer. 'Pray, Sir George,' I cried, 'would you serve the woman so whom you were so near making your wife?' My brother was going to reply, but my mother frowned at him: he looked displeased, and went out of the room. 'Dear madam,' said I, 'there is something the matter with Mr. Faulkland; don't keep me in suspense. I *know* there is something which you and my brother would conceal from me. Is Mr. Faulkland sick?' 'Not that I know of, I assure you,' answered my mother; 'he was well yesterday, for we had a message from him to inquire after your health, as we have had every day, for he is but at Richmond; and you know, if he were in town, he could receive no other satisfaction than hearing from you, as you are too ill to admit of any visits.' My mother rang the bell imme-

diately, and asked me to take something; I saw she wanted to turn the conversation. My maid Ellen came into the room, and I asked no more questions.

"My mother staid with me till it was time for her to go to rest; but avoided mentioning Mr. Faulkland's name, or giving me an opportunity of doing it; for she tenderly conjured me to keep myself quite composed, and not to talk. The doctor assured her this night that he thought me out of danger; and she retired with looks of cordial delight.

"She was no sooner gone than I called Ellen to my bed-side, and charged her to tell me all she knew concerning Mr. Faulkland. The poor girl looked concerned, and seemed to study for an answer. 'Lord bless me, madam! what should *I* know of him more than my lady has told you?' 'When did you see him?' said I. 'Not for several days,' she answered. 'Where is he?' 'At Richmond, I heard Sir George say; but I suppose he will come to town as soon as he hears you are well enough to receive him.'

I caught hold of her hand; 'Ellen, I know there is something relative to Mr. Faulkland which you all want to hide from me; do not attempt to deceive me; you may be sure, whatever it be, I must soon be informed of it; in the mean while my doubts make me very unhappy.'

"The good-natured girl's trouble and confusion increased as I spoke: 'my dear madam,' she replied, 'when you are better, my lady will tell you all.'—'No, no, Ellen, I must know it now; tell it me this minute, or you must never expect to see me better under such uncertainty. What is the *all*, the frightful ALL, that I am to be told? How you have shocked me with that little word!'"

The explanation comes but too soon. The first day after Sidney's illness, a vile anonymous scrawl, directed to her, had accused Faulkland of falsehood and perfidy; of seducing and forsaking a young lady whom he met at Bath, and whose letter, appealing in the tenderest terms to his honour and compassion, and deprecating his

approaching marriage with another, was enclosed in the cover. This letter (sent in revenge by a discarded servant who had robbed his master of it) Lady Biddulph, during the illness of Sidney, had opened. She taxed Mr. Faulkland with the facts, which he could not deny; but hinted that there were very mitigating circumstances; while Sir George more warmly interposed, and declared Faulkland to be absolutely under no engagements whatever to the fair writer, and to have been merely the victim of a very weak, and a very bad woman—an aunt and niece. Lady Biddulph would hear nothing on the subject. A circumstance that occurred to herself in early life, gave her an almost superstitious horror to the marriage of her daughter with a man on whom another woman had any sort of claim. The warm and imprudent, but generous Faulkland, is condemned without a hearing; all his letters and his attempts at justification are alike rejected, and Lady Biddulph calls upon her daughter to justify the excellent precepts she has received from her earliest youth,

by shewing herself capable of firmness in this first severe trial of her affections. The heart of Sidney pleads for Orlando—a secret *presentiment* tells her that Lady Biddulph has been too precipitate; her brother (and surely a brother might be trusted in what concerned a sister's honour) warmly pleads for Faulkland, but in vain. Lady Biddulph had even governed her daughter with despotic sway; as Sidney eloquently expresses it, "her neck had been early bowed to obedience." Every sentiment of delicacy demanded that she should not appear less scrupulous than her mother on this important occasion. The match is broken off. Faulkland, unable to remain in the scene of his lost happiness, goes to Germany; and Sidney is hurried into the country, where, some months afterwards, a matchmaking old lady, in conjunction with her mother, hurries on a marriage between her and a Mr. Arnold, upon the common-place pretext that, as her marriage with Mr. Faulkland had been much talked of, nothing would so surely save her from mortification in the eyes of the

world, as the speedily appearing in it as the bride of another. The victim of obedience, Sidney bestows on Mr. Arnold her passive and reluctant hand: but afterwards finds, in the indulgence of her husband, and the endearments of two lovely children some compensation for the agonies she has suffered. But she is destined for greater trials—destined to experience the unjustly alineated affections of a husband, and to drain to the last dregs the bitter cup of calamity.

The woman, or rather avenging fiend, who by entangling the weak Arnold in her chains is to accomplish this diabolical purpose, is described with some of the happiest strokes of Mrs. Sheridan's pen. Sidney and her husband remove to South Park, a country residence settled upon her at her marriage: they are there visited by two "charming women," as the unsuspecting Sidney describes them, Mrs. Gerrard and Lady V——. Lady V—— is really the amiable being she appears: but Mrs. Gerrard is, though unknown by name to Sidney, the ser-

pent who had already worked so much evil to her and Faulkland, by purposely throwing in his way the weak girl who had led him into a temporary error, expiated by a lasting punishment. But this appears hereafter. The following are Sidney's first impressions of this false friend.

"We dined to-day, according to appointment, with Mrs. Gerrard. She called her house a cottage, nor does it appear much better at the outside, but within, it is a fairy palace. Never was any thing so neat, so elegant, so perfectly well fancied as the fitting up of all her rooms. Her bedchambers are furnished with fine chintzes, and her drawing-room with the prettiest Indian satin I ever saw. Her little villa is called Ashby, and her husband, she told me, purchased it for her some time before his death, and left it to her.

"Our entertainment was splendid almost to profusion, though there was no company but Mr. Arnold and myself. I told her if she always gave such dinners it would frighten me away from her: indeed it was the only circum-

stance in her whole conduct that did not please me, for I was charmed with the rest of her behaviour.

"If Mrs. Gerrard is not as highly polished as some women are, who perhaps have had a more enlarged education, she makes full amends for it by a perfect good humour, a sprightliness always entertaining, and a quickness of thought that gives her conversation an air of something very *like* wit, and which I dare say passes for the thing itself with most people."—(*Sidney Biddulph*, Vol. I.)

It is needless to point out the pleasing and delicate turn of discrimination in this last sentence. Now view the reverse of the picture by a hand that knew her better. In a letter to Sir George Biddulph, Faulkland thus expresses himself upon the subject of Mrs. Gerrard:

"She has no solid understanding; but possesses, in the place of it, a sort of flashy wit, that imposes on common hearers, and makes her pass for what is called clever. With a great deal of vanity, and an affectation of tenderness,

which covers the most termagant spirit that ever animated a female breast, her ruling and governing passion is avarice; and yet, strange to tell! generosity is of all things what she professes to admire, and is most studious of having thought her characteristic. Her pretensions to this virtue I have opposed to her vice of avarice, as the terms appropriated to each seem most contrary in their natures: yet I do not mean by generosity, that bounteous disposition which is commonly understood by the word; no, no; she aims at the reputation of this virtue in *our* more exalted idea of it, and would fain be thought *a woman of a great soul.* This phrase is often in her mouth; and though her whole conduct gives the lie to her professions, she would tell you fifty stories, without a word of truth in one of them, to prove how nobly she had acted on such and such occasions."—(Vol. II.)

Surely the hand that traced these two portraits of the same person possessed no common talent for character-painting!—Sidney herself soon begins to discover faults in her new friend. She

is not fond of needlework, and she *is* fond of play. By degrees Mrs. Gerrard throws off the mask. At this juncture Mr. Faulkland returns from abroad. This relationship to Lady V— conducts him on a visit to the neighbourhood of South Park. A slight, a very slight acquaintance is renewed between him and Sidney. Some accidental circumstances occasion her to incur a fresh obligation to his humanity and courage. Mrs. Gerrard grounds her machinations upon these. She informs Mr. Arnold of the attachment formerly subsisting between Faulkland and his wife, a circumstance of which Sidney, from a delicacy of which she severely repents, had forborne to apprize him; she misrepresents circumstances; she avails herself of accidents; and, determined wholly to engross the infatuated Arnold, contrives at length to make him believe that Sidney and Mr. Faulkland have a preconcerted assignation at her house. The consequences are dreadful; Arnold, who had long been grown unkind and neglectful becomes furious. Entangled with

Mrs. Gerrard, and anxious for a pretext to rid himself of the unhappy wife whom he has injured, he departs from South Park, leaving a cruel letter, acquainting her that he will never return till she has left it. His children, he determines, shall remain with him. In this crisis of her fate, Sidney has but one refuge; but that one is ever open to her—the arms of her fond though mistaken mother. With agonies such as only a faithful wife and fond parent can conceive, she takes a despairing leave of her little ones, and, an exile from her husband's house, seeks the asylum of her mother's protection in London. The meeting between her and Lady Biddulph is most affecting.

"I found my mother at the house in St. James's Street, where I now am: my letter had thrown her into agonies from which she had not yet recovered. 'What have you written to me?' said she, as she held me in her arms, 'your dreadful letter has almost killed me. Sure, sure, my dear child, it cannot be true that

you have left your husband? What is the cause? What have *you* done! or what has *he* done?' I begged my mother to compose herself a little, and then related to her every circumstance.

" Her lamentations pierced my heart. She wrung her hands in bitterness of anguish: 'Why did not the grave hide me,' said she, 'before I saw shame and sorrow heaped upon my child? I looked to die in peace with you; you might have lengthened my days for a while, but you cut them off—my eyes will close in affliction. A wounded spirit who can bear! had you died in your cradle we had both been happy; my child would now have been a cherub. An angel you have been in my eyes, and I am punished for it, but that was *my* crime, not yours; you are a martyr to the crimes of others.'

" My mother wept not all this time. I wished she had. Her passionate looks and tones affected me more than tears could have done. My

eyes began to run over—hers soon accompanied me, and it a little relieved the vehemence of our grief."

All this time the author has not forgot Faulkland—Faulkland, the darling hero of her pen and of the hero's mind, who never for a moment loses the interest he first inspired as Sidney's betrothed, her "ever-destined husband." Divided by untoward circumstances from the only object of his choice, his love (though concealed never subdued) thenceforward assumed a higher character: and he watches over the woman he still adores with the disinterested zeal of a guardian spirit. Overwhelmed with indignation at seeing the innocent and beloved Sidney an exile from her husband's house, and deprived of reputation, domestic happiness, every thing that is most valuable to woman, his anguish increased by the consideration that he himself is the alleged, though unoffending cause, he determines to make one last effort to open the eyes of the infatuated Arnold; but the manner in which he executes this plan is such as could only be

conceived by a mind equally determined, daring, and romantic. We have already said that Mrs. Gerrard was well known to him, and that her calumnies against him and Sidney, were only one of a series of crimes which loudly called for retribution. But how does Faulkland inflict it?—Sidney (Mrs. Arnold) is the secret object, the end and motive of every action and every sacrifice, suggested by his pure and hopeless passion, to the generous Faulkland. Her esteem he had as yet possessed, in the loss of every tenderer sentiment: but even this last stake appears to him cheap in comparison with restoring her to happiness; and, in order to separate Arnold from Mrs. Gerrard, and thus pave the way to his reunion with a deserving wife, Faulkland ventures to appear for a moment in her eyes in a light the most foreign to his real character.

Two miserable months had passed away, and Mr. Arnold was in town on account of a lawsuit, but so far from seeking his wife, was momentarily expecting to be joined by his base companion, when Sidney was aroused from the stupor of

grief, by the amazing intelligence (conveyed in a letter from Lady V—) that Mrs. Gerrard had eloped from the neighbourhood of South Park, and that Mr. Faulkland was the companion of her elopement! A ray of consolation breaks in upon Sidney. That Mrs. Gerrard should, after half ruining Arnold, treat him with this undissembled perfidy, will, she trusts have the effect of opening his eyes to his former folly; and that Mr. Faulkland should be the person she elopes with, will more than any thing, she hopes, tend to convince him of the futility of his suspicions with regard to herself. Lady Biddulph triumphs in her superior discernment, in having always pronounced Mr. Faulkland to be a man of immoral character; while, Sir George, who never wavered in his undeviating friendship to him, acknowledges himself confounded, and is obliged to confess it is "the strangest thing he ever knew in his life."

That Sidney could not wholly withdraw her esteem from Orlando Faulkland without a pang, we may infer from the pleasure with which she

receives his justification, which she communicates in the following manner to her Cecilia :

" I have been almost asleep, my dear Cecilia, for this week past, but I have been roused this morning in a most extraordinary manner. Sir George called on us. He ran up stairs in a violent hurry, and had a countenance when he entered the room which spoke wonders.

" In short he came to communicate a packet from Faulkland, (now on the other side of the channel) explaining the real springs of his extraordinary action. The following passages will sufficiently elucidate it.

" Boulogne.

" I am in haste, my dear Biddulph, to vindicate myself to you, but in much more haste to do so to Mrs. Arnold, who, if she bestows a thought at all on me, must, I am sure, hold me in the utmost contempt; and great reason would she have if things were always as they appear. Methinks I see her " beautiful scorn," at hearing I had carried off Mrs. Gerrard ;— and yet I *have* carried her off, and she is now

in my possession, not displeased with her situation. But I assure you, Sir George, I have no designs but what are for the good both of her soul and body, and I have hitherto treated her like a vestal. What a paradox is here, say you. Have patience 'till I tell you the story of my knight errantry.

" You are to know then that as Arnold's amour with Mrs. Gerrard was no secret at V— Hall, from the moment I heard it I meditated a design of breaking the detestable union : not out of regard either to him or her, but in hopes of restoring to the most amiable of women a besotted husband's heart, of which nothing but downright magic, infernal witchcraft, could have robbed her. The woman is handsome, 'tis true ; but she is a silly toad, and as fantastic as an ape. I had formed this design, I say, and in consequence resolved to renew my acquaintance with Mrs. Gerrard ; for I had known her before,—known her to my cost. She it was, this identical devil, whom I have now in my power, that was the cause of Miss Burchell's misfor-

tune, and therefore the remote cause of my losing Miss Biddulph. Had it not been for her, I should never have had the fall of that unhappy girl to answer for. I do not rank this affair in the number of capital crimes, yet I never think of it without a pang.

" I meant to carry Mrs. Gerrard away with the appearance of her own consent, and knew this was impossible while her lover remained so near her. I had formed but a rough sketch of my plan when I received your letter, which summoned me to Sidney Castle, and resolved not to apprize you of it till the enterprize was crowned with success.

" On my return from visiting you, the first news I heard at V— Hall was, that Mr. Arnold and his lady were parted. I cursed my own dilatoriness that I had not executed my plan before things were brought to such extremities, for I well knew it was that artful fiend who had occasioned it, though I then little thought how fatally I had contributed towards the misfortunes of the most amiable and respectable of women.

" Lady V—— told me that your sister, having discovered her husband's infidelity, had left him on that account; but my lord soon let me into the whole secret. Oh! Sir George—that angel, who deserved the first monarch in the universe, to be cast off by an undiscerning dolt! and I, though innocently, the accursed cause. I cannot think with patience of what the divine creature has suffered on my account; but was it not all from the beginning owing to Mrs. Gerrard, that avenging fury, sent on earth as a scourge for the sins of me and my ancestors!—I rave—but no wonder. I am mad upon that subject."—

In the history of this elopement, *sans amour*, an elopement which has no parallel in any other novel, the author has availed herself of her uncommon powers of wit and humour to enliven and diversify her narrative.

After an enumeration of all the measures he had taken, and the springs he had set in motion, to ensure complete success to his designs, designs which are conducted with consummate

art and ingenuity, Faulkland describes the manner in which he accomplished the accompanying Mrs. Gerrard, with her own consent, from a ball, and thus continues :

" Our ball was very well conducted ; I danced with Mrs. Gerrard, and we passed a very agreeable evening.

" Mrs. Gerrard was one of the first that offered to go."

Her servants, (with some contrivance on the part of Faulkland,) were found so intoxicated they could not attend her.

" In this emergency nothing was more natural than to offer *my* servants to attend her home, and of course to wait on her myself to see her safe. She readily accepted the first offer, but declined the other. This was easily got over : I handed her into her chariot, and stepped in after her."

He then relates the arrangements he had made to secure her completely in his power, and thus proceeds :

"Mrs. Gerrard was not immediately aware of our going out of the road; she was in high spirits, and I kept her in chat. As soon as she perceived it she cried out with some surprise, 'Lord, Mr. Faulkland! where is the fellow carrying us? he has missed his way.' She called to him, but the coachman, who had orders not to stop unless I spoke to him, only drove the faster. 'Pray do call to him,' said she. I told her there was no possibility of turning in the narrow road in which we then were; that when we got out of it, I would speak to the coachman; and begged her in the meanwhile not to be frightened. The lane was a very long one, but our rapid wheels soon carried us to the end of it; where I had appointed Pivet and one of my footmen to meet us on horseback.

"At the sight of two horsemen, who were apparently waiting for us, she screamed out, 'Oh! the villain, he has brought us here to be robbed.' She had a good many jewels on her, and, to say the truth, had some reason for her fears.

"I saw she was heartily frightened, and thought it time to undeceive her. I was not illnatured enough to keep her longer under the apprehensions of highwaymen; and thought she would be less shocked at finding there was a design upon her person, than on her diamond earrings. 'Now,' said I, taking one of her hands with rather more freedom than respect, 'since we are out of all danger of discovery, or any possibility of pursuit, I will tell you a secret;' and I spoke with an easy assured tone. She drew her hand away,—'What do you mean, Sir?'

"'Nothing, madam, but to have the pleasure of your company in a little trip I am going to take. Believe me, you are not in the least danger: you are under my protection. Those are my servants that you see riding with us; and you may judge of the value I set upon you by the pains I have taken to get you into my possession.'

"'Lord, Mr. Faulkland! why sure you can't be serious?'

" 'Never more so in my life, madam. I have long had a design upon you, but your connexion with Mr. Arnold—'

" 'My connexion with Mr. Arnold, Sir!' interrupting me); 'I don't understand you.'

" 'Come, come, Mrs. Gerrard; you and I are old acquaintance, you know; tis no time for dissembling.'

" The lady had now recovered her courage; she was no longer in fear of being robbed, and her spirits returned.

" 'You audacious creature!—how dare you treat me thus? Have you the assurance to insinuate that there was any thing criminal in my attachment to Mr. Arnold and his family?'

" 'My dear madam, I accuse you of no attachment to any of his family; he himself was the only favoured person.'

"'Sure there never was such an impertinent wretch! But I know the author of this scandal: it was Mrs. ——,' (and she dared to profane your sister's honoured name); 'but I de-

spise her; and Mr. Arnold shall soon know how I have been affronted;'—and she fell a crying.

"'My dear Mrs. Gerrard, I beg your pardon; I did not mean to offend you. If Mr. Arnold admired you, he did no more than what every man does who sees you. I beseech you to compose yourself: by all that is good I mean you no harm;—be calm, I conjure you; and don't spoil the prettiest face in England with crying.'

"'A daring, provoking creature!'—she sobbed. 'What could put such an attempt as this into your head—and to what place are you carrying me?'

"'Only to France, my dear creature; have you ever been there?'

"'To France, to France!'—she exclaimed; 'and do you dare to think you shall carry me there?'

"'Oh! you'll like it of all things,' said I, 'when you get there.'

"What do you think her reply was? Why, neither more nor less than a good box on the ear. I caught hold of her hand, and kissed it.

"'You charming vixen, how I admire you for your spirit!' She endeavoured to wrest her hands from me, but I held them both fast for fear of another blow.

"'Base, insolent villain!'

"As she rose in her epithets I replied with—'Lovely, charming, adorable, tender, gentle creature.' She cried again: but they were spiteful tears, and did not create in me the least touch of that pity, to which, on any other occasion, they might have moved me.'"—*Sidney Biddulph, Vol. II.*

There is much comic spirit and humour in this narrative and dialogue; and some of Faulkland's repartees are excellent.

Having sent home Mrs. Gerrard's chariot at the first baiting place, which belonged to people devoted to Faulkland's orders, the rest of the journey was performed in Faulkland's travelling carriage, until they reached an inn near Rochester, where Faulkland had prepared an agreeable surprise for her; this was no other than the attendance of her woman, Mrs. Rachael, with all

the jewels and valuables the lady had left behind. In order to make Mrs. Gerrard's departure appear to have been with her own consent, Mr. Faulkland had called at Ashby on the evening of the ball, and told the damsel (unknown to her mistress) that her lady was to go off with him that night; that the thing had, for certain reasons, not been determined on till that very evening; and that he had just snatched a minute, to desire her to get all her lady's trinkets together, and whatever money and bills she had in her escrutoire. In order for this he gave her a parcel of small keys, which he had in his pocket for the purpose. Whether any of the keys he gave her would fit the locks (he adds with his characteristic humour) he was not much concerned. If they did not, he concluded, she would think her mistress had made a mistake, and force them open rather than fail.

The mutual surprise of Rachael and Mrs. Gerrard at meeting is well described.

"The chariot drove into the court-yard close to the door of the inn.

"We both darted into the house; dressed as we were for a ball, we made an odd appearance as travellers at that hour in the morning.

"I inquired for Mrs. Gerrard's maid, and was carried into the room where she was. I desired her to lay out her lady's toilette, for that Mrs. Gerrard would presently put herself in a proper habit for travelling. I saw a vast heap of things lying unpacked on a bed which was in the room, and asked her how she had managed so cleverly as to get such a number of things together without observation. She told me she had lost no time, from the minute I left her till the arrival of her guide; she had huddled her lady's clothes into a large portmanteau; after which she went to examine her lady's escrutoire, but was a long time puzzled in endeavouring to open it; as none of the keys I had given her answered, she endeavoured to force it open with as little noise as possible, but in vain. She then had recourse to a second trial of the keys, when one of them, which probably had been passed

by before, luckily opened the lock, and she had secured all the money she could find.

" Mrs. Gerrard's astonishment at the sight of her maid was past description.

" Rachael! in a tone of admiration—Rachael, who did not think there was any thing unexpected or extraordinary in their meeting, quite at a loss to guess at what her mistress wondered, answered in her turn, with some surprise, ' Madam !'—and waited, expecting she would give her some orders; which, finding the lady did not, the maid asked her very composedly, would she please to undress. ' I hope, madam,' said I, stepping forward, ' that Mrs. Rachael has taken care to bring you every thing you may have occasion for; I shall leave you in her hands, and wish you a good repose.'—' Strange, astonishing creature !' said Mrs. Gerrard, looking at me with less anger than surprise; I bowed and left the room."

The narrative, which is broken into two parts, closes with the safe arrival of the travellers at Boulogne. A second packet informs Sidney

and Sir George of Faulkland's happy accomplishment of the most difficult part of his task, the inducing Mrs. Gerrard to write to Arnold a letter of his dictating, disavowing her calumnies, and renouncing all further correspondence with him. The gradual steps by which he leads this selfish and artful jilt to the point he so much desired, though too long for insertion, are described with consummate skill. Mrs. Gerrard takes up the idea that no motive but love could have prompted Faulkland's extraordinary proceeding; and, infatuated by vanity, believes that if she consents with a good grace to give up Arnold, he will be induced to make her his wife. In order to further this plan, she tells him a hypocritical story of the distress in which she was left at the death of her husband Captain Gerrard; of her ignorance when she first received his addresses (which was in town); that Arnold was a married man; of the reluctance with which she suffered his profusion, &c. &c.; for he had furnished her house at Ashby, and insisted on her keeping a chariot.

She professes her contrition for her past conduct, and her good resolutions for the future. Faulkland lets her go on in this manner, little suspecting she is furthering his plan when she intends to promote her own; and when he has at length brought her to the point of acknowledging her wrongs to Mrs. Arnold and himself, he tells her, that if she is in earnest in her desire to repair them, she can offer no objection to the letter he proposes. The scene of dictating the letter,—the remarks of Faulkland interspersed,—the affected generosity, and real sordid avarice and meanness, of this base and unprincipled woman,—all these circumstances are given with a comic force, as genuine as any to be met with. Orlando thus describes it.

"She took the pen in her hand, but seemed irresolute, and at a loss how to begin. 'Come, madam,' said I, 'and confute by your own example, the received but erroneous opinion, that if a woman once strays from the paths of virtue she never returns to them.'

"'A false and ill-grounded opinion indeed,'

said she, lifting up her prophane eyes, as in penitence. 'What am I to say?'—You are to observe that *my* notes as she went along, while I dictated, are put between hooks.

" THE LETTER.

" (Begin.) 'Dear Sir,'—(for I would be neither too familiar nor too cold,) 'The terms on which you and I have lived, entitle you to an explanation of my reasons for leaving you so abruptly; and I hope the generosity of my motive, will incline you to overlook the seeming unkindness of the action.'

" (This you may assure yourself it will when he comes to consider coolly.)

" 'The unhappiness that I occasioned in your family, by causing the separation of you and your wife, has, for a long time, been a thorn in my heart: and the more so, as, besides the robbing her of your affections, I own, and take shame to myself in the confession,' (how noble must he think this confession!) 'that those

aspersions which I threw on her, had not the least foundation in truth.'

" (This is truly great.)

" ' I always believed her perfectly innocent; but if I could have had the least possible doubt of it before, I must be now confirmed in that opinion by Mr. Faulkland, who can have no reason for excusing or palliating facts of this nature from me at present.'

" (Here she added of herself, repeating it first aloud to me :)

" ' And I think the preference he has given me to her now, in her state of separation, is a convincing proof of this.'

" (An admirable argument!) (Her vanity would not let her slip this observation.)

" (Proceed, madam.)

" ' The true reason of my insinuations against her, were no other than that I could not bear to share your affections with any body.'

" (And a very sufficient reason too, which a man that loves can easily forgive.)

" ' I knew that so long as she gave you no

cause of complaint, you were too just to withdraw your whole heart from her, and nothing *but* the whole would content me.'

" (Still you see you shew a great mind.)

" 'True,' said she, going on: 'but my reason for leaving him without apprizing him of it, what are we to say for that?'

" (Oh! nothing more easy to execute: he will admire you the more for the reason I shall give: Come.)

" 'My departing without first making you acquainted with my design, and going off with another person, may, at first sight, seem very strange: but, to tell you the real state of my heart, I found I could not trust to its firmness on the subject of parting with you. I loved you so, that it was with pain and grief I made the resolution; and I knew too well that had you used any arguments, which to be sure you would have done, to dissuade me, I, like an easy fool, would have given up all my good designs.'

" (I am only afraid this will make him love you more than ever.)

" (She smiled, as she continued to write.)

" ' As for the other article—'

" (This I was more puzzled to excuse than the first; but, putting on a bold face I said, ' Madam, I hope you will not condemn me here, while you excuse yourself. The saying you were *run away with*, will knock all the rest on the head, and he may chuse whether he will believe that you really intended to break off with him or not; therefore that particular had better not be touched upon.' ' Well,' said she, ' get me out of this scrape as cleverly as you brought me into it.'—' Fear not,' said I—' go on').

" ' As for the other article, though I shall never love Mr. Faulkland as I have done you, yet in him I have found a protector; and through his means I hope to pass the remainder of my life, in a manner more suitable to a woman of a generous way of thinking, than one wherein she considered herself as encroach-

ing upon the rights of another. I hope by this sacrifice, which I have made of my love to a more heroic principle, that I shall expiate my former offence; and that you will follow my example so far as to make what reparation you can to the woman we have both injured.'

" (How this must exalt you in his opinion!)

" 'I think it must,' cried she, bridling up her head, as if they were really her own sentiments. 'I believe,' said I, 'this is all that is necessary to be said: you may add in a postscript, that as he furnished the house for you at Ashby, every thing in it is at his service; together with your chariot and horses, which were also his gifts. She demurred to this; and in the midst of her heroics said, I wish I could get somebody to sell them for me privately, and remit the money to me: for since I *am* here, I should like to see a little more of France before I return.' I told her that would look mean, and below a great mind.' 'Well,' said she, 'let them go.' "—

The dreadful moment of eclaircissement ap-

proached. How to extricate himself out of the difficulties in which he had involved himself for Mrs. Arnold's sake, was now to be the consideration of Faulkland. To prevent Mrs. Gerrard's return to England, where she would have again blown up the flames of discord, and to ensure to her an honourable and comfortable independence in the foreign country to which he had transported her, were the two points most strongly suggested to the prudence and generosity of Faulkland. Every thing short of the "sacrifice of himself," as he expressed it, he was willing to undertake for the benefit of Mrs. Arnold; but nothing less than the devotion of his life would, in Mrs. Gerrard's opinion, make amends for the concessions to which he had persuaded her; and though she was so thoroughly known to him, and though he had never deceived her by any serious professions of love, her vanity made her believe a marriage with him was an event likely to take place. It became necessary to keep her

no longer in ignorance of his final intentions; and the explanation is conducted, on both sides, with truly dramatic effect.

Having made Mrs. Gerrard seal and despatch her letter, Faulkland continues:

"You will think, perhaps, that as I have managed it, I have really given her a sort of merit with Arnold, in the acknowledgment of her faults, and the pretended reason she gives for leaving him. No such thing, Sir Geerge. Arnold is a man of too much sense, and knows the world too well to be so deceived. All her professions must go for nothing, when *facts* are against her. It is plain she went off with another man, and to all appearances premeditately, as her maid and her riches bore her company. It is also plain by her own confession that this man stands well with her. As for her recanting her injurious aspersions on poor Mrs. Arnold, 'tis the only circumstance in her letter likely to gain belief; and for the rest, to any one of common understanding, who lays circumstances together, it will appear as I intended it should,

the contrivance of an artful jilt; who, having almost ruined the wretch she had in her power, would afterwards make a *merit* of deserting him.

" I pity him from my heart in his present situation: for it will be some time before he will be sensible of the good I have done him; and I dare swear the man is at this time so ungrateful, that, if he could, he would cut my throat. I do not want him to know the extent of his obligations to me: I shall be satisfied to sit down in the contemplation of my meritorious actions, without enjoying the fame of them. This greatness of mind I learnt of Mrs. Gerrard."—

There is a fine sarcasm in that last sentence.

" The having gained my material point put me into high spirits. I praised Mrs. Gerrard for the part she had acted, though I very much feared she would repent of it when we came to explanations, which I resolved should be on that very day. I told her I hoped she would

oblige me with her company at dinner. She consented with a bow.

" I never saw Mrs. Gerrard so agreeable as she was during dinner—she was in high spirits and good humour. I almost thought it a pity to let her down that day: but I considered the longer her expectations were kept up, the greater would be her disappointment, and determined to put her out of doubt.

" I had been told Mrs. Gerrard was no enemy to a cheerful glass, but observed that she drank nothing but wine and water made very weak. This I was afraid would not be sufficient to keep up her courage under what I intended to say to her. I pretended to be disposed to drink, and insisted on her helping me out with a flask of burgundy. With affected coyness she suffered me to fill her glass; the second offer I made, her resistance was less; the third she made no objection to at all; and the fourth she filled for herself. I thought her now a match for what I had to say.

" I had made the glass pass briskly, and had

filled up the intervals with singing catches and rattling on any subject that came into my head.

" Mrs. Gerrard seemed to grow a little out of humour at my levity. I found the burgundy had been quite thrown away upon her: she was silent for a few minutes, and seemed to be considering of something. At last she opened, and I will give you the conversation that passed between us.

" *Mrs. G.* ' Mr. Faulkland, it is time that you and I should understand one another's meaning a little better than we do at present. You know very well that you have put an end to all my expectations in England. Indeed, if I were at liberty, I could not have the face to return there again in any character but that of your wife.'

" [I was glad she began first, and that, though I guessed at her views, she had used so little caution in discovering them, as it at once roused in me an indignation which I could not suppress, and without which I could not have brought myself to mortify her as she deserved.]

" *Mr. F.* ' *My wife*, Madam!' (stopping her at that tremendous word,) ' be pleased to tell me if I heard you right?'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Yes, Sir, it was your wife I said; I thought, Sir,' (stifling the anger that I saw rising) ' that the words which you yourself dictated in the letter which I just now wrote, where you say, ' *I had in you found a protector, by whose means I should be able to pass the rest of my life in a manner more suitable to a woman of a generous way of thinking, than that wherein she considered herself as encroaching on the rights of another.*'—Were not these your own words, Sir?'

" *Mr. F.* ' They were, Madam.' (To say the truth, there was something equivocal in the paragraph, though, when I desired her to write it, this construction never entered into my head.)

" *Mrs. G.* ' Then, Sir, how am I to understand them?'

" *Mr. F.* ' I protest, Madam, you have forced

a construction, that I never once so much as dreamed of.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Sir, you use me very ill! I did not expect such treatment.'

" *Mr. F.* ' How, pray, Madam? Did I ever say I would marry you?'

" *Mrs G.* ' No, Sir, but your behaviour has given me room to suppose that such a thing was in your thoughts.'

" *Mr. F.* ' Are you not then the more obliged to me, for treating you with such respect as to make you fancy so?'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Respect, respect!' (muttering between her teeth) ' Mr. Faulkland:' (and she stood up) ' there is not a man in England but yourself, after what I have declared, that would refuse to make me his wife.'

" *Mr. F.* ' What have you declared, Mrs. Gerrard?'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Why, have I not ingenuously owned my failings, shewn myself sorry for them, quitted them, and made all the reparation in my power?'

" (I was amazed to see how audaciously she adopted as her own, sentiments which I had suggested to her. It was so like her that I could have laughed in her face.)

" *Mr. F.* ' Your behaviour on this occasion has really been worthy of the imitation of all your own sex, and the praise of ours. For a woman *voluntarily* to quit an irregular life, and that too from mere motives of *conscience*'—

" (I paused and sat silent, looking at her and playing with one of the glasses.)

" *Mrs. G.* ' Mr. Faulkland, if you are disposed to have done trifling, and will vouchsafe me a serious answer, pray, tell me, are you absolutely determined not to marry me?'

" *Mr. F.* ' Absolutely.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' You are not serious, sure?'

" *Mr. F.* ' My dear creature, why sure *thou* canst not be serious in asking me the question.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Sir, I *am* serious, and expect a serious answer.'

" *Mr. F.* ' Why then, seriously, I have no more thoughts of marrying thee, than I have

of marrying the first Sultana in the Grand Seignor's seraglio.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Very well, Sir, very well; I am answered.' (And she rose and walked quickly about the room.)

" We were both silent: she, I suppose, expected that I should propose other terms, and a settlement, and waited to try if I would speak. I had a mind to tease her a little, and hummed a tune.

" *Mrs. G.* (advancing to me and making a low curtesy with a most scornful and sarcastical air) ' May I presume to inquire what your Mightiness's pleasure is in regard to me? Do you intend to keep me for your nurse against your next illness, or intend me for the Grand Seignor's harem to wait on the first Sultana?'

" *Mr. F.* ' I can't tell.' (Carelessly, and looking another way) ' I have not yet determined which way I shall dispose of you.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Dispose of me! *dispose* of me! why sure the man has lost his senses!'

" *Mr. F.* ' Look you, Mrs. Gerrard: we

will play no longer at cross purposes. Sit down and be calm for a few minutes till you hear what I have to say.'

" (She did so, with a kind of impatience in her looks.)

" 'How long have you and I been acquainted?'

" *Mrs. G.* 'Lord, what is that question to the purpose?'

" *Mr. F.* 'Only that you may look back, and, upon recollection, ask yourself if you ever had any reason to look upon me as your lover?'

" *Mrs. G.* 'I made that observation to you when we were travelling together. What is the use of it now?'

" *Mr. F.* 'Did I, in the course of our journey, declare myself to be such, or drop the least hint of devoting myself to you on any condition?'

" *Mrs. G.* 'We did not talk on the subject at all.'

" *Mr. F.* 'Did I ever presume on the advantage of having you in my power, to venture on the smallest liberty with you, or ever deviate

from that respect in my behaviour, that I was used at all other times to treat you with ?'

" *Mrs. G.* ' I do not say you did, and it was that very behaviour that inclined me to imagine you had other thoughts than those I find you have.'

" *Mr. F.* ' You drew a wrong conclusion, though it is to be confessed not a very unnatural one.'

" *Mrs. G.* ' Well well,' (peevishly) ' I don't understand your riddles—to the point.'

" *Mr. F.* ' Why the point, in short, is this: that without any particular designs on your person, my whole view in carrying you out of England, was to break off your intercourse with Mr. Arnold.' "

This declaration acts like a thunderstroke upon Mrs. Gerrard.

Without heeding the indignation painted in her countenance, Faulkland proceeds briefly to recapitulate the motives that were sufficient, without love, to actuate his conduct. To restore an amiable woman to her family: a wife to

her husband, and a mother to her children. To remove the distress of her brother, his own particular friend, and the anguish of the aged Lady Biddulph, almost broken-hearted with the ill-usage of her child. To clear Mrs. Arnold's character from aspersion, and to open the eyes of Arnold, with regard to his injustice to Faulkland himself. He concludes:

" 'Now, Mrs. Gerrard, lay your hand on your heart, and answer me if I have not given you reasons, which, though they may not be satisfactory to you, are in themselves of weight sufficient to justify my conduct.' "

The effect of his communication is striking and terrible.

" All artifice was now at an end, and she unmasked the fiend directly. She started off her chair with the looks and gestures of a fury; and fixing her eyes (which had really something diabolical in them at that instant) steadily on me, 'You wretch!' she cried, with a voice answerable to her looks, 'you are such a false, dissembling, mean-spirited reptile, that if you

had a kingdom to offer me, and would lay yourself at my feet to beg my acceptance of it, I would trample on you like dirt!'—and she stamped on the floor with the air of an Amazon."

It is needless minutely to pursue the story further. Necessity, by degrees, subdues that termagant spirit, and the consideration of her ruined fortune and demolished reputation, induces Mrs. Gerrard to listen to the overtures of Faulkland, generous even in his vengeance; who offers to ensure to her a comfortable independence, with a husband of his choosing, if she will remain in France; he also proposes to her the alternative of a convent, which she rejects with horror and disdain. The husband is a young man in Faulkland's suite, who had become enamoured of Mrs. Gerrard's beauty, notwithstanding that Faulkland did not conceal from him her bad qualities. With this young man, who is enabled by Faulkland's generosity to set up in business, and make a very handsome settlement on her, she at length retires in tolerable contentment from the scene; and as she was

herself of very low origin, the marriage could neither be considered as a hardship nor a degradation.

The surprise, indignation, grief, and rage of Mrs. Gerrard, and the sullen submission into which those passions at length subside, are touched with the hand of a master; and the narrative concludes with Orlando's brief notice, of his having had "the satisfaction of bestowing, with his own hand, that inestimable treasure of virtue and meekness, Mrs. Gerrard, on his faithful squire, Monsieur Pivet, to the no small joy of the latter, and, if the truth were known, to the no great mortification of the former."—Vol. II.

I have been so copious in my extracts from this part of the story, that it necessarily enjoins brevity in the remainder. It might have been easy to select more striking passages, but Sidney Biddulph has had its full praise as a moral and pathetic work; *my* object was rather to prove it was not deficient in spirit and gaiety; a brief analysis of the rest may suffice, although

the reader must be aware that in a novel perfectly well contrived, the under-characters and incidents cannot be sacrificed without "curtailing it" of its "fair proportion," and injuring the effect and symmetry of the whole. The well-contrived, though romantic scheme of Orlando, is productive of its full effect. The letter of the faithless Gerrard at once opens the eyes of Arnold; but while he is eagerly desiring a reconciliation with his injured wife, a lawsuit, in which his whole estate is involved, is decided against him, and he is left almost a beggar. The scruples he now feels are overcome by the advances of the tender and generous Sidney; and they retire to Lady Biddulph's abode of Sidney-Castle, with diminished means but increased affection, where they enjoy a life of the purest domestic happiness, till the death of Arnold, who loses his life in consequence of a fall from his horse in hunting.

The death-bed of the penitent Arnold contains some of the finest strokes of pathetic painting to be met with in any composition: there

is something in the mixture of firmness and agonizing sorrow of Sidney on that occasion, and in certain traits of her conduct, that will remind the reader of the beautiful character of Lady Rachel Russell.

After an interval given to this solemn scene of deep affliction, other interests resume their power.—

Sidney is again free. Faulkland, the generous Faulkland, to whom she owes such important obligations, is returned to England, and loves her still "with an unparalleled affection." Does not his constant devotion deserve some reward? Her brother pleads,—he pleads for himself,—and Sidney is not insensible to his unequalled merit; but the fatal obstacle that prevented their union before, still exists, in her opinion, with increased force. Miss Burchell, the unhappy young woman who was the cause of their disunion, had been recommended, by the humanity of Faulkland himself, to the countenance and compassion of Lady Biddulph, on his first going abroad after his disappointment. Since

that time she had won upon the esteem both of the mother and daughter, by her "most seeming virtuous" and modest deportment. She had obtained a promise from Sidney, to use her influence with Mr. Faulkland in her favour: an infant son preferred a strong claim to his justice and affection. In several letters in answer to Faulkland's renewed and impassioned declarations, Sidney urges these, and many more arguments, in favour of his forsaken mistress; to which Faulkland still continues to reply, that Miss Burchell *has no right to his vows.* Hopeless at length of prevailing with *her* who possesses his heart, he yields to her representations, and determines on deserving and obtaining at least her esteem.

There is a beautiful congeniality in the high tone of mind of Sidney and Orlando. His marriage with Miss Burchell is accomplished, and he accepts her as the gift of Mrs. Arnold; accepts the fatal bane of his existence from the hand of the woman he adores.

Disappointed in her early love, wronged by

the man upon whom she had afterwards bestowed her dutiful affection, and obliged by the dictates of honour, and a too punctilious delicacy, a second time to refuse happiness when offered to her acceptance, Sidney had tasted of every evil but poverty; and this, after the death of Lady Biddulph, comes fast upon her. The misfortunes and imprudence of Arnold enabled him to leave her very little. At the death of her mother every thing went to Sir George. Since he found she had been instrumental in marrying his friend to Miss Burchell, for whom he entertained the strongest contempt, Sir George had renounced her. At this moment, Orlando, rejected in her happier days, and now retired with the wife of *her* choice to his estate in Ireland, resumes his guardian watchfulness; and through the delicate medium of a female friend, sends her a considerable supply, with an offer of its continuance; but Sidney, aware that the lady from whom the offers appear to come, is not in circumstances sufficiently affluent to make such generous donations, suspects the giver, and

rejects the gift. The subsequent sufferings to which she is exposed; the arrival of Warner, the rich West-Indian; and the whole episode in which he is concerned, are points of the story so well known, that it would be superfluous to make any further mention of them here. The story of Warner has been translated into several languages; and the comic as well as serious scenes it includes have made it deservedly popular.

Sidney is now in possession of all that wealth can give; but the sharpest trial is yet to come. Many circumstances have conspired to make her suspect Mrs. Faulkland's unworthiness; but still the bitterness with which her brother speaks of her, appears to her unjust. Being reconciled to Sir George Biddulph, she takes an opportunity, in private conversation with him, to ask if he has any further cause than she knows of, for his ill opinion of her; and Sir George, being thus pressed, makes disclosures so unexpected and extraordinary, that the ill fated Sidney deeply repents the share she had in promoting the marriage of Mr. Faulkland. *His* catastrophe now

draws near: the conduct of Mrs. Faulkland justifies Sidney's wildest apprehensions. Faulkland is deceived, dishonoured, and takes justice into his own hands: his life is forfeited to the laws of his country, and he flies to England, to take a last look on *her* who had been the cause of all his sorrows.

Then, in that moment of mutual agony, when with faltering tongue, and looks fastened upon *hers*, in wistful anguish he whispers the thrilling demand: "What recompense can you make the man whom you have brought to misery, shame, and death?"—When again, in the impassioned delirium of love and of frenzy, he at length claims Sidney as his own,—his chosen,—*his bride!*—whom no adverse fate shall sever from him more,—all our sympathies are awakened for the sufferings of a being so wronged, so exalted; and we are ready to exclaim with Shakespeare, on witnessing a ruin *as* complete,—

"O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!"—

Though the distress here seems wrought up to the utmost, the most unexpected and surprising events succeed each other with rapidity; but to pursue the story any further, even by analysis, would be equally an injustice to the author and the reader. The closing scenes of Sidney Biddulph must be perused at full length; as any attempt to extract from them, would too much injure their beauty and pathos: and wherever they *have* been read, they have met with the most unequivocal testimony to their truth and interest,—breathless attention, and involuntary tears.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Sheridan in London.—Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson.—Samuel Richardson.—Mrs. Peckhard.—Colloquial powers of Mrs. Sheridan.—Learning.—Description of the person of Mrs. Sheridan.—Anecdotes.—Habits of self-control.—Love of Truth.—Anecdote.—Second removal to Windsor.—Windsor Anecdotes.—"The Discovery."—Examination of a passage in Dr. Watkins relative to Garrick and "The Discovery."—Friendly disposition of Mrs. Sheridan.—Mr. Armstrong.—Humorous competition between "The Discovery" and "The Duenna."—Whimsical conduct of Mrs. Cholmondely.—Critique on the Comedy.

I HAVE now touched upon the principal points of the first part of "Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph." It was published originally in three volumes. The second part, which did not come out until after Mrs. Sheridan's decease, introduces many new characters, and may in a great measure be denominated a new work. It shall be noticed in its proper place.

At this time, Dr. Johnson was a frequent visitor at Mr. Sheridan's, when he was in London, and used to fondle the children in his

rough way; who might, so far, boast of having been "*élevées sur les genoux des philosophes.*" Observing that Mrs. Sheridan's eldest daughter* already began to give signs of that love of literature for which she was afterwards distinguished, and that she was very attentively employed in reading his "Ramblers," her mother hastened to assure Dr. Johnson it was only works of that unexceptionable description which she suffered to meet the eyes of her little girl. "In general," added Mrs. Sheridan, "I am very careful to keep from her all such books as are not calculated, by their moral tendency, expressly for the perusal of youth."

"Then you are a fool, madam!" vociferated the Doctor. "Turn your daughter loose into your library; if she is well inclined, she will choose only nutritious food; if otherwise, all your precautions will avail nothing to prevent her following the natural bent of her inclinations."

* Afterwards married to Joseph Lefanu, Esq., of Dublin.

This injudicious and dangerous extension of the maxim, "*aux sains tout est sain,*" in a man of Dr. Johnson's acknowledged morality, can only be accounted for, by the peculiarity attributed to him by his friend and biographer Mr. Boswell, that of liking to "take down" a person by unexpected censure, in the moment of complacency and self-approbation: otherwise, both his sense of what was right, and his habitual admiration of Mrs. Sheridan's judgment, must have prevented the rude reproof: as the practice of indiscriminate reading might assuredly introduce the young mind to an acquaintance with the most blameable examples, and immoral precepts, while yet unaware that any danger was incurred.

Another favourite guest was the novelist, Samuel Richardson. He was not only an improving, but, occasionally, a very agreeable companion. Like most persons of genius, however, his spirits were unequal.

Mr. Sheridan has sometimes called, and found poor Richardson (to use his own expression)

dull "as a drowning fly," and vainly struggling with the oppressive weight of melancholy that oppressed him. On those occasions, the best way to rouse his spirits was to divert his attention from the unpleasant object that might happen to engross it. When this was judiciously effected, Richardson would gradually become animated, cast off his mantle of gloom, and display in his conversation all the whim, point, and humour that guided his pen, when pourtraying a Lovelace, or a Charlotte Grandison.

The ingenious Mrs. Peckhard, wife to the celebrated dissenting minister of that name, was also often of these parties. Mr. Peckhard is well known as the author of several polemical tracts. The name of Mrs. Peckhard frequently occurs in the "Correspondence" of Samuel Richardson. Her talents for conversation were considerable. One *bon-mot* of hers, uttered in the playfulness of unrestrained domestic intercourse, proves her to have been a scholar as well as a wit.

One of Mr. Sheridan's daughters being a

florid, chubby child, had obtained in the family the name of "Libs;" because, like one of the winds thus classically denominated, she had cheeks remarkably full and glowing.

One evening, that the assembled company were engaged in some serious literary disquisition, and that the child, with the weariness incidental to her age, was impatiently enduring their neglect, and the absence of those little fond attentions to which she had been accustomed, Mrs. Peckhard suddenly terminated a conversation which must have been utterly unintelligible to the infant listener, by gaily exclaiming, "Come, don't let us be so austere, or Libs wo'n't note us." Thus, in one short, and apparently familiar English sentence, including the Latin names of the three winds, Auster, Libs, and Notos. This whimsical adaptation of classical words to a modern sense, was admired by Mr. Sheridan as a remarkably happy impromptu.

But for playful gaiety, for solid sense, for every different charm of conversation, none

approached to the degree of perfection possessed by Mrs. Sheridan.

That she was more celebrated for colloquial powers than even for her literary talents, the opinion of numerous departed friends, and of one illustrious living witness,* bear ample testimony: yet, in what that peculiar charm of conversation consisted, that attraction by which Mrs. Sheridan, without beauty, fascinated and delighted minds of the most opposite textures, it is difficult at this distance of time to determine.

The same woman, whose powers of mind were approved and admired by Johnson, and Johnson's great successor in the critical chair, was often also mentioned to her children in terms of regret and feeling, by some of the gayest and most dissipated men of the age, but who had yet sufficient taste to relish her society and court her conversation.

Perhaps Mr. Boswell may help us to a solution of this difficulty. He says, " Mrs. She-

* The very learned Dr. Samuel Parr.

ridan was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man. She was sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative." Now, though this sentence, at a first glance, may appear to contain but measured praise, it will be found, upon examination of the four qualities enumerated, to include all the principal ingredients that render conversation delightful. A knowledge of books and of the world, mingled in just proportions; wit, regulated and restrained by a temper and manners of singular mildness; a total exemption from affectation, pedantry, and literary pretension; and the glow of a kind heart, and a communicative disposition pervading every expression, and diffusing its harmonizing richness over the whole.

That *learning* is not necessarily a bar to a lady's agreeableness is evident, as Mrs. Sheridan loved and studied the classics, and has particularly left in "Sidney Biddulph," a memorial of her attachment to Horace.

The "enfranchisement" of her faithful servant, "with a sort of merry ceremony," so

agreeably described towards the close of the book, also shows a mind familiar with classical ideas; but these are the only two instances that I remember in which they recur: and when we compare this temperate use of her treasures, with the laborious trifling so painfully conspicuous in some modern learned females, we may learn to appreciate her modest self-denial. To a species of reading the very reverse of the classical, yet one which has almost always possessed a charm for persons of genius, Mrs. Sheridan also appears to have been addicted—I mean the old romances.

Her views of life were justly conceived, and expressed with forcible simplicity. Who that has known distress but must subscribe with his whole heart to the justice of the following sentence?

"Oh, my friend, these are the stings of poverty! It is not the hard bed, nor the homely board, but the oppressive insolence of proud prosperity: 'tis that only which can inflict a wound on the ingenuous mind."*

* Sidney Biddulph, vol. iii.

Her knowledge of the gay and busy world was extensive: though from the distance of time, and the early age of her children, when she died, I am enabled to select but a few names from among the number of her acquaintance. It is certain that she had seen life under a great variety of aspects; and her works bear testimony that her powers of selection were not inferior to the opportunities afforded her for observation. The mode of intercourse subsisting formerly, when friends assembled in small knots, really to enjoy the pleasure of each other's society, was certainly more favourable to the developement of mental graces, than those crowds in which all distinction of character and sentiment must be lost. Add to this, that she had in her husband's society, the opportunity of constant intercourse with an accomplished mind, and even supposing her various avocations did not leave Mrs. Sheridan a great deal of leisure for reading, she must have acquired, both in her domestic circle and from the conversation of her guests, a correctness of judgment,

and delicacy of taste, without the danger of contracting either that reserved or that pedantic manner, the mingled result of timidity and pride, which is too often, in a woman, the consequence of solitary study.

Mrs. Sheridan, though not strictly handsome, had a countenance extremely interesting. Her eyes were remarkably fine and very dark, corresponding with the colour of her hair, which was black. Her figure would have been good, but for an accident that happened when she was an infant, by which she contracted a lameness that prevented her from going to any distance without support. This, by taking pains, she could disguise in walking a short way: but if she attempted more, it was perceptible. The fairness and beauty of her bust, neck, and arms, were allowed to have seldom been rivalled. The hand and arm has been copied by a painter, who whimsically requested that she would allow him to make them his model in a full-length portrait of a lady who did not, in that respect, possess the advantage of beauty in so high a degree.

Another anecdote is remembered of Mrs. Sheridan's going up from Windsor in a public coach, in which was a gentleman with whom she was unacquainted. After some time, Mrs. Sheridan, who, like most ladies of that period, took snuff, drew off her glove to take a pinch. The stranger, smiling, observed, "There are few ladies, Madam, who would have concealed such a hand and arm so long!"

In her dress, Mrs. Sheridan, though never affecting the studious negligence of the literary ladies of her day, was certainly rather inclined to simplicity than show. Although the portrait represents her without any head dress, she most usually wore a cap of a grave and matronly form. Her gowns, which were invariably of silk, were always made up in the form of *négligées*, on account of the accident in her shape.

Her love of plainness and grave colours a little exceeding what her husband thought necessary for her time of life, Mr. Sheridan took the following method to correct it.

As Mrs. Sheridan was reading by the fire, in a gown of dark brown silk, a colour he particularly detested, a hot coal fell, unobserved by her, upon the train. It must be remembered that the substantial silks then worn by the ladies were not in danger of blazing up suddenly, and communicating the flame to the person: Mr. Sheridan, therefore, quietly let the coal moulder on, till it had burnt a hole in the train sufficiently large to render the favourite brown dress unfit for future service; and then, for the first time, called her attention to it by saying, "My dear, don't you see your gown's on fire!" —These notices, however trifling, will, I trust, not be deemed impertinent, as contributing to complete the portrait of a woman, at once of an amiable and exemplary character. Nothing is now wanting to complete this picture, but a more copious selection than has yet appeared of her correspondence; but I have not been able to procure any manuscript letters, her family having unfortunately not preserved them; and from those that have been published I am sparing in

my choice, selecting only such passages as bear undoubted proofs of having been suggested by Mrs. Sheridan's genuine feelings. For this I have two reasons: I do not wish to fatigue the reader with the same passages over again, that have been given in the "Memoirs of R. B. Sheridan;" and I have no means of ascertaining whether, in the "Miscellany," in which they were originally published without the permission, and against the wish of her family, they may not have been subjected both to omissions and interpolations.

Though often a sufferer in her health, Mrs. Sheridan had none of the querulousness of an invalid: on the contrary, her naturally good spirits are seen perpetually breaking forth like sunshine, from the midst of the clouds of sickness and sorrow. A letter, part of which has been already given to the public, concludes with the following pretty playful passage to her protégé, Samuel Whyte.

"I am glad to hear you have recovered your health and spirits, and with them, I hope, your

peace of mind. In truth, I believe I have inverted the order of things here, and have placed the effects before their cause: be that as it may, I wish them to you altogether, with an additional acquisition of reputation and fortune. There!—I think I have put matters to rights, and given the words their proper places; for according to the temporal order of things, in your way of life, money most assuredly waits on reputation."

Here we see, indeed, the amiable disposition of mind described by the poet:

> "The affection warm, the temper mild,
> The sweetness that in sorrow smiled!"

Mrs. Sheridan's temper, though excellent from nature, was rendered yet more amiable by long habits of discipline and self-command. It was, indeed, very warm; and that was a circumstance this excellent woman did not hesitate often to confess to her children, while inculcating by example the duty, and illustrating the possibility of keeping the temper under control.

Indeed the best tempers have often been observed to be those which it has cost their owners many bitter lessons of patience and self-denial to subdue and regulate; they are as much to be preferred to the thoughtless good-nature, originating merely in a happy frame of the animal spirits, as every excellence, attained by a due exertion of the will and energies of the mind, is to be placed in the scale of rational existence above the possession of merely natural gifts.

Mrs. Sheridan possessed a very conscientious mind, and the strongest sense of honour. The following paragraph, in answer to the offer of an imparted secret from a male correspondent, contains a maxim that it might be advantageous for every married woman to follow.

"You told me you would let me know, *under seal of secresy*, why a certain person interfered so warmly about Mrs. ———. I should be glad you would explain this. I assure you your information shall be a secret, *except to Mr. Sheridan.* A secret delivered to me, *viva voce*, might be lodged safely within my own breast;

but those communicated by letter hazard a participation, *as I have no correspondence that I do not show.*"

Perhaps a better union of discretion and frankness was never exhibited in a female character.

She had an inviolable respect for TRUTH, and such a happy manner of impressing the importance of it upon others, that in her household, among her children, servants, and tradespeople, it was remarked that those even who practised disguise and equivocation with others, experienced an unconquerable reluctance to impose upon her. Of this the following anecdote furnishes a familiar example. During Mrs. Sheridan's residence in London, the man who supplied the family with bread had been wronged by his boy to a considerable amount; yet, although he was certain of the fact, upon taxing the youth with it, he could by no means induce him to acknowledge it. At length he applied to Mrs. Sheridan: "If you would have the goodness to speak to him, ma'am," he said, "I am sure he could not persist in his wickedness."

With this request, dictated no doubt by some knowledge of her character, Mrs. Sheridan thought proper to comply. She saw the boy in private; and with that happy art of persuasion, which, from her earliest youth had been her study with the young and uneducated, represented to him the double guilt he incurred.

The culprit could not withstand the impressive goodness, distant alike from sectarian rigidity and worldly carelessness, that distinguished the manner of Mrs. Sheridan—the scrutiny of her mild yet penetrating eye: he made a full confession of his fault; and when asked why he had not done so sooner, replied, that "he had intended to have persisted in his denial to his master, but that *he could not tell a lie to Mrs. Sheridan.*"

The summer of 1762 again beheld Mrs. Sheridan at "the favourite place of her inspiration."

> "Thy forest, Windsor! and thy green retreats,
> At once the Monarch's, and the Muses' seats,"

proved equally a scene of satisfaction to her-

self, and of health to her children, whose early recollections were associated with that august and classical spot.

Some of these recollections related to amusing incidents, but which will perhaps appear too trifling in the narration.

With the happy facility peculiar to their years, they had formed an acquaintance with a very old lady who occupied apartments in the palace, and who had been maid of honour to Queen Anne. This old lady presented the youngest with some relic of ancient finery, that appeared in her eyes very precious, and she was the cause of their making frequent visits to the palace.

The preparations for the arrival of the Royal Family did not even induce them to discontinue these visits; and during the stay of the illustrious party, Charles, Mr. Sheridan's eldest boy, (in search, it must be supposed, of his old friend) wandered as far as some of the private apartments, and found himself suddenly in the presence of a lady who was playing upon the harp-

sichord ; she smiled with condescending sweetness on the child, and took no other notice of his intrusion ; which the little culprit afterwards learned was upon CHARLOTTE, the new and amiable sovereign of England.

Another time the heedlessness of the children gave Mr. Sheridan more serious cause of alarm. The eldest Miss Sheridan, who had been walking in the Park attended by a female servant, came in with an air of uncommon joyousness and elation, to shew her father a prize that she had ordered the girl to carry home. It was the prettiest little beast in the world, she said, that she and her companion had discovered in the Park. Mr. Sheridan, who imagined it to be a little cat or a dog at the utmost, listened with indifference to this description ; but his dismay was proportionate when he discovered that the prize, which the maid had carried wrapped up in her apron, was nothing less than a fawn from the royal enclosures ! The countenance of Mr. Sheridan, when animated by surprise or anger, was awful ; and his eyes

seemed to dart forth sparks of fire. Turning on the trembling servant one of those looks formed "to threaten and command," his first words were, "Girl! do you know you might be hanged for this?" and his next, a peremptory order to return that instant, and replace the fawn in Windsor Park.

The girl, who had never been used to dispute her young lady's supreme commands, was now equally terrified at her master's representation of the consequence of her compliance: she thought she never could fly too quickly to restore the little sylvan beauty to its native shades, and returned (with far greater rapidity than she had left it) to the Park. Fortunately the transaction had not been remarked. The sentinel, unaware of the nature of the bundle she still carried in her apron, suffered her to pass; and with trembling haste, and the sentence of Mr. Sheridan still ringing in her ears, to place the fawn upon the spot of grass from which she had so heedlessly taken it.

It was during their excursions to Windsor

that the intimacy between Mr. Sheridan's family and Dr. Robert Sumner took place; Dr. Sumner was *then* one of the masters of Eton.*

This summer, at Windsor, Mrs. Sheridan formed the plan and sketched the scenes of her first comedy, "The Discovery."

On her return to town, Garrick earnestly requested to see it. Mrs. Sheridan read it to him herself, and he immediately begged it might be put into his hands, and undertook the character of Sir Anthony Branville. Mrs. Sheridan was now raised to the highest point of

* "He was" (says the Rev. Dr. Samuel Parr) "a thorough judge of moral and intellectual merit. Great was the regard and the admiration which he felt for Mrs. Frances Sheridan; and very intimate was the friendship which subsisted between him and her husband."

A little above is added, by the same hand:

"I knew her (Mrs. Sheridan), from her general character, from her excellent publications, and from one or two interviews which I had with her at the house of the very learned Dr. Sumner of Harrow."

"In clearness of intellect, delicacy of taste, and purity of heart, she was one of the first women whom I ever knew."

literary celebrity; distinguished by the approbation of Richardson, as a novel-writer, and of Garrick, as a dramatist, the two most flattering distinctions *that* time could boast attended her career.

Dr. Watkins thinks (p. 111—112) this eagerness of Garrick to have the "Discovery" put into his hands, an undeniable proof of his "liberality," and "a complete refutation of all the idle stories that were told, to the disadvantage of Garrick, with regard to his keeping down Sheridan, *out of* jealousy of his superior talents."

We have already seen, that if they were "idle stories," the persons that circulated and perpetuated them were Garrick's two admirers, Thomas Davies and Arthur Murphy. As to the liberality of Garrick, without wishing to make unnecessary objections, upon a point in which every one has a right to have his own opinion, we must be permitted to observe, that it is not clear where the liberality lay. The biographer says, we have "the testimony of Mrs. Sheridan herself," that he was "ac-

tuated" by a "desire to serve his friends, and not the mere interests of the Theatre."

The testimony alluded to is in a letter dated "London, Nov. 29th, 1762," and beginning:

"It was not in *revenge* that I did not answer your's of October sooner. The truth is, since my return to town from Windsor, I have been much employed, though often interrupted by intervals of bad health, which of late have frequently returned on me. I have, however, mustered up spirits enough to write—what do you think? Why a Comedy! which is now in rehearsal at Drury Lane." After mentioning that she had formed her plan, and nearly finished the scenes at Windsor, as above related, Mrs. Sheridan adds: "Mr. Garrick was pressing to see it, and accordingly I read it to him myself. *What his opinion of it is you may judge* by his immediately requesting it to be put into his hands, and undertaking to play the *second* character, a comic and very original one.

"My first theatrical essay has so far met with an almost unprecedented success. Most of

us poor authors find a difficulty in getting our pieces on the stage, and perhaps are obliged to dangle after managers a season or two: *I*, on the contrary, was *solicited* to give *mine*, as soon as it was seen."

In this, and the preceding paragraph, I confess, I can see nothing more than the honest exultation, experienced by even the most modest mind, on its efforts being crowned with *success*, but not a word of *gratitude;* in fact, their was none due. The interest in this case was mutual, and the transaction was therefore of course productive of mutual satisfaction. Garrick saw, with one glance of his eagle eye, that two characters in the comedy (those of Sir Harry and Lady Flutter) were exactly suited to two young persons in the house, Miss Pope, and Mr. O'Brien, whose talents he was desirous to bring forward. He also himself took an uncommon fancy to the character of Sir Anthony Branville, and the event justified his predilection, for we have Davies's "testimony," that

" Garrick's reputation for pleasing in Branville was so great, that he was, the year before he left the stage, called upon by a royal command to revive the Discovery, and play Sir Anthony Branville."—*Life of Garrick*, vol. i. p. 311.

The same letter that contains an account of the " Discovery," relates the flattering mark of royal favour shewn to Mr. Sheridan, in the grant of a pension; and the manner in which it is worded, places the estimation in which her husband was held, in a stronger light than any biographer has chosen to notice.

" Mr. Sheridan is now busied in the English Dictionary, which he is encouraged to pursue with the more alacrity, as his Majesty has vouchsafed him a signal mark of royal favour. He has granted him a pension of two hundred pounds a year merely as an encouragement to his undertaking, *and this* without *solicitation, which makes it the more valuable.* The concluding paragraph in the letter affords one proof, among many, that neither domestic employments, nor literary engagements, prevented

Mrs. Sheridan from exercising her kind heart in the performance of obliging actions: while her truly fascinating manners, which rendered her acceptable to all ranks of persons, furnished her promptly with the means of success. As it alludes to a negociation that seems to have been begun above six months before, I shall give the extracts from her two differently dated letters together. The first mention of it is, "London, March 30th, 1762."

"I waited in hopes of being able to give you some satisfactory account of your friend Mr. Armstrong; and am very glad to inform you, that I happened to have interest enough with a very worthy gentleman to get him a small employment, which he has thought worth his acceptance. Upon my first application to this gentleman, he told me he had nothing in his power: but that I might depend on him when any thing offered. I then got my brother to write to Mr. Adair: who returned the same answer; and I was afraid the young man might have continued here a long time without suc-

ceeding, when my friend Commissioner Tom, came himself to tell me he had a place worth sixty pounds a year, and apartments, &c. with it. I understood from Mr. Armstrong that he had a mind to go abroad: but as nothing eligible was to be procured in that way, I thought that this might be better than nothing. I wrote to him, and desired him to wait on Commissioner Tom. He did so, and Mr. Tom has since informed me, that he accepted of the place, and purposed going down to Portsmouth, where he is stationed."

It appears afterwards that the young man, in whom she interested herself, missed this appointment by some failure of his own; but this did not damp Mrs. Sheridan's benevolence, for she thus concludes her letter of Nov. 29th.

"I know not whether Mr. Armstrong ever gave you any account of himself. A failure on his side occasioned his losing the little place which was ready for his acceptance. Perhaps he has done better: for, on his missing that, I got him so well recommended, that he was sent

with the army to Portugal, in a very good station, where I suppose he now is."

On the fifth of February, 1763, the comedy of "The Discovery" was presented to the public. The first night of its representation must have been one of fearful anxiety to Mrs. Sheridan. Notwithsanding the success of "Sidney Biddulph," her uncertainty must have been great respecting the reception of this, her first dramatic attempt. That excellence in one style of writing is no certain preservative against complete failure in another, the example of some of the dramatic pieces of the celebrated novelist Henry Fielding, sufficiently testifies. Most truly has it been observed, that, "the sneering reader, and the loud critic, and the tart review, are scattered and distant calamities; but the trampling of an intelligent or an ignorant audience, on a production, which, be it good or bad, has been a mental labour to the writer, is a palpable and immediate grievance." At the same time it must be admitted, as

a *set-off* to this justly drawn and strongly coloured picture, that if the censure and sarcasm elicited by the author who writes only for the closet be "scattered" and "distant," so, also, may sometimes be his praise: and, however extensive his fame, he cannot know (except by inspiration) every rapture that has been excited by his numbers, every heart that has glowed in solitude over his verse. On the contrary, there is in the "instantaneous perception" of the theatre, an immediate acknowledgment of excellence, a grateful return for instruction and pleasure received, most flattering to the feelings of any writer who sets a just value on the deserved approbation of his fellow-beings.

On this trying occasion Mrs. Sheridan had all the support that a just confidence in her own powers, united to the highest domestic encouragement, could give her.

The principal humorous character in her play (Sir Anthony Branville,) was honoured with the particular approbation of Garrick himself, who was desirous of undertaking it; and the piece

was brought out with the advantage of the whole strength of the house. Mr. Sheridan playing Lord Medway; Mrs. Pritchard, Lady Medway; Mrs. Yates, the widow Knightly; Mrs. Palmer, Miss Richley; Mr. O'Brien and Miss Pope, Sir Harry and Lady Flutter: and Mr. Garrick, Sir Anthony Branville.*

* Garrick retained his predilection for this character long after the hand that had traced it was cold. In 1775, when "The Duenna" appeared at the other theatre, and proved for above seventy nights the sole magnet of attraction, Garrick, to divide the public attention, revived "The Discovery" at Drury Lane, and announced himself for the character of Sir Anthony Branville. This setting-up of the mother against the son, appeared to old Mr. Sheridan something so strange and unnatural, that he would not allow his daughters, though in London, to go to see it; by which means they were deprived of the double and exquisite treat of witnessing the inimitable performance of Garrick in a comedy of their mother's writing.

Mr. Harris, of Covent Garden, nothing daunted by this manœuvre, continued to act "The Duenna" to overflowing houses. This proceeding used to be called at the time (in allusion to the character who gives her name to Mr. Sheridan's piece, and also to the advanced age of Mr. Garrick, the

The strong characters of Lord Medway and Mrs. Knightly, and the humorous ones of Sir Anthony Branville, Sir Harry, and Lady Flutter, could not, she felt assured, fail of being relished and justly appreciated by the tasteful and discriminating part of the audience in the pit and boxes, and that her presence *there* was unnecessary; but as there was an infusion of sentiment exquisitely delicate in the piece, and as the whole belonged rather to the cast of high and genteel comedy than of broad and farcical humour, she thought the respectable supporters of the middle gallery might require a little *leading;* and in consequence stationed herself, with Mr. Archibald Frazer and a considerable body of friends, to point out to them *when* they should admire, and contribute *their* share to the success of the play by obstreperous thunders of

the principal supporter of "The Discovery,") "The Old Woman against the Old Man." Davies mentions Garrick's once playing "The Discovery" in 1775, "by royal command;" but omits or was ignorant of his motive for continuing it.

applause. Having claimed approbation for the complete success of this manœuvre, the lively Mrs. Cholmondely now requested the fortunate poetess would hasten the arrival of supper for herself and hungry friends: and *those* are little acquainted with the anxieties and solicitudes of the drama, who cannot imagine that seldom was a supper dispatched with greater gaiety and appetite.

"The Discovery" continued to be acted with success for a considerable part of the winter; and Mrs. Sheridan's fame and profit increased proportionably.

Of this comedy, as I have already mentioned the leading characters, it is unnecessary to say much.

The plot is deep and interesting; and the truly tremendous and startling "Discovery" most artfully concealed until the final development. The imperious character of Lord Medway finely contrasts with the gentleness of his lady; and the really frigid temper and affected raptures of the romantic old knight, Sir Anthony

Branville, who makes love according to the antiquated rules of chivalry, and esteems a task or a penance set him by his mistress as a favour, were rendered irresistibly ludicrous and effective by the inimitable acting of Garrick. But still a great portion of the amusement certainly rests upon the two characters of Sir Harry and Lady Flutter. These claim the merit, almost singular in the modern drama, of perfect originality in the conception. The quarrels and "makings-up" of this school-boy and school-girl pair; their mutual reproaches and recriminations, which are in the best style of Sheridan's comic dialogue; their dangerous reference to the interested arbitration of Lord Medway; and their final and heartfelt reconciliation, present altogether such a "picture of youth," as was rarely traced by any other pen, in a manner equally true to nature.

If Sir Harry and Lady Flutter were fortunate in the skill with which they were delineated, they were equally so in the justice done to them in representation. Miss Pope, and the elegant

O'Brien,* were at that time the breathing prototypes of the characters they sustained. The gaiety, vivacity and sprightliness that shone conspicuous in this accomplished pair, their extreme youth and interesting appearance, gave to the scenes in which they acted together, a degree of brilliancy and effect, which was produced not only by their talents, but by their being themselves, like the characters they represented, in all the spring and pride of the earliest and most blooming period of existence. The value set by Garrick upon the comedy continued unabated; and he went so far as to assure a publisher, who afterwards bought a share in it, "that it was one of the best comedies he ever read, and that he could not do better than to lay out his money in so valuable a purchase."

If "The Discovery" has, in modern times, been comparatively laid aside, this may partly be attributed to the want of an adequate representative of Sir Anthony Branville, and partly to

* Afterwards married to Lady Susan Strangways.

the large drafts drawn upon Mrs. Sheridan's muse by succeeding dramatic writers. In Holcroft's "Road to Ruin," the filial self-devotion of Harry Dornton is copied, without acknowledgment, from that of Colonel Medway; and in his most lachrymose comedy, "The Deserted Daughter," the character of Lady Anne Mordent is a compound of Lady Easy in "The Careless Husband," and Lady Medway in "The Discovery."

CHAPTER VII.

Portrait of Mrs. Cholmondely.—The original of several of Mrs. Brookes' Heroines.—Friendship for Mrs. Sheridan. —Anecdotes of Catherine Macauley.—Humorous Vanity of Mrs. Clive.—Anecdote.—The Dupe.—Ode to Patience. —Mrs. Woffington's Phædra.—Epigram on a Reply made to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough.—Affliction, an Apologue.—Distinguished Compliment paid to Mr. Sheridan, in Ireland.—Mr. Sheridan's Opinion of the Female Sex.— Bath and Bristol.—Mrs. Sheridan becomes a Pupil of Mr. Linley's.—The Linley Family.—Juvenile Anecdote of Thomas Linley.—Mr. Sheridan and Miss Hannah More. —Dangerous Accident to Mrs. Sheridan.—Edinburgh.— Mr. Sheridan honoured with the Freedom of the City.— Lady Maxwell mother to the Duchess of Gordon.—Removal to France.

Of the Hon. Mrs. Cholmondely, the lady who has been introduced as bearing so conspicuous and whimsical a part in the success of "The Discovery," it is now time to say something further.

The intimacy of this lady with Mrs. Sheridan originated in the admiration Mrs. Chol-

mondely had conceived for her character. On Mrs. Sheridan's coming to London, Mrs. Cholmondely sought her out, and *would* be acquainted with her. It is difficult to conceive the original attraction that conducted to Mrs. Sheridan, a woman of mild manners and domestic habits, Mrs. Cholmondely, the lively heroine of many popular novels of the day; the original Lady Anne Wilmot of Mrs. Brookes' "Julia Mandeville;" and the Bell Fermor of her "History of Emily Montague:" Mrs. Cholmondely, whose wit and beauty are so often the theme of the writers of the age, and whose delight it was (within the strict limits of decorum) to attract around her a circle of male admirers. Notwithstanding the diversity in their manners, the attachment that united these ladies was certainly very strong, for the remembrance of her friend was cherished by Mrs. Cholmondely with emotions of the liveliest tenderness. After Mrs. Sheridan's decease, and the return of her daughters from France, Mrs. Cholmondely was among the first to seek them out; and often, in

the midst of her liveliest sallies, the tears would rush unbidden into her beautiful eyes, and she would abruptly exclaim to the youngest, "Do not look thus at me—you remind me too much of your mother."

This sympathy must be attributed to the brilliant talents and amiable manners that distinguished both ladies. Mrs. Cholmondely possessed a warm heart and a cultivated understanding; she loved admiration much, but she valued friendship more. These qualities form a sufficient foundation for an intimate union of minds: for as to "des âmes qui se sont touchés par tous les points de cohérence," they are only to be found in the dreams of Rousseau, while we remain in this sublunary state of existence.

During her residence in London, Mrs. Sheridan was made happy in a renewal of intercourse with her favourite brother, Richard Chamberlaine, who was married and settled as a surgeon in Beaufort Buildings. This gentleman valued his sister's society so highly, that he never failed, after going his medical rounds, to pass a part

of every evening that he could spare at her house.

One more London acquaintance of Mrs. Sheridan's I shall introduce to the reader; this was Mrs., or (as she liked to be distinguished) Catherine Macauley.

Mrs. Lefanu, of Dublin, then a fine intelligent girl of between nine and ten years of age, used to give a humorous account of the first interview between these literary ladies.

Mrs. Macauley introduced herself by complimenting Mrs. Sheridan upon her novel; Mrs. Sheridan, as in duty bound, replied by complimenting Mrs. Macauley upon her history; and the manner of both gave Miss Sheridan the idea that neither of them had read the works of the other. Mrs. Macauley did not appear to her to have any of those charms so profusely ascribed to her by a female biographer:* neither was there any thing of that levity or extravagance of dress imputed to her by one of the other sex.† Mrs. Macauley struck

* Mary Hayes's Biographical Dictionary of Celebrated Women. † Boswell's Johnson.

Miss Sheridan as a plain woman,—pale, tall, cold, and formal; with nothing reprehensible in her manners, nor any thing peculiarly fascinating in her address.

At a subsequent period, Mrs. Macauley is said to have given occasion for remark, by the luxury and extravagance of her establishment, by the affected form of her cards of invitation, "Catherine Macauley At Home to the Literati:" and by a degree of gaiety, and coquetry of the toilette, that was deemed inconsistent with republican simplicity. But let us be just to the memory of a very uncommon female, who rose above the disadvantages and deficiencies of education, at a time that literature was not cultivated among women as it is at present. Small could not be the industry and perseverance of a woman, who, under these circumstances, was able to raise herself to rank with the historians of her country; nor was the merit inconsiderable of that person, who was admired by Cowper, and quoted with approbation by Mr. Fox.

The talents of Mrs. Sheridan were of a

sort more popular and generally amusing. In the end of this year she had finished another comedy, entitled "The Dupe," which was read with approbation at her own house by the assembled performers. It was pronounced by several of the best judges to be possessed of equal merit with the first, and sanguine expectations were entertained of its ultimate success: but, like Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man," which was ill-received by the audience that had welcomed with smiles his first effort, "She Stoops to Conquer," "The Dupe" was fated to experience the mutability of public opinion; aided, in a great measure, by the theatrical cabals of a popular actress, who had conceived herself ill-used by Mr. Sheridan, and knew there was no way to wound him more effectually than through the being whom, upon earth, he most loved and valued.

The "popular actress," alluded to in the account of this transaction, I suspect to be Mrs. Clive; who had vowed immortal hatred to Mr. Sheridan, for a cause sufficiently ludicrous.

This actress, unrivalled in comic humour, and valued for her talents in private life, by such judges as Horace Walpole, and Dr. Johnson, not content with these legitimate tributes to her merit, aimed at characters in tragedy, for which the plainness of her person totally disqualified her. Mr. Sheridan used humorously to term the Green-room "The Limbo of Vanity:" and so indeed we must pronounce it, when we find Mrs. Clive insisting on playing the beautiful and interesting Monimia, in Otway's tragedy of "The Orphan;" and, because Mr. Sheridan refused to play Chamont to her Monimia, she from that moment put herself at the head of a party against him.

If Mrs. Sheridan was thus made the innocent victim of the malice of an actress, she had at the same time reason to applaud the liberality and gentlemanly conduct of a bookseller. Millar, who had purchased "The Dupe," shortly afterwards sent Mrs. Sheridan an additional hundred pounds besides the copy-right, with the following polite letter.

"MADAM: Believe me I am truly concerned that your comedy has met with such severe, and, without flattery I must add, such undeserved treatment on the stage. Neither am I singular in this opinion: the rapid sale of it is an undeniable proof of its merit, which the public have not been blind to in the closet. The demand for your piece at my shop has been so uncommonly great, that, exclusive of the copy-money, it has enabled me to present you with the enclosed, of which I entreat your acceptance, as a small testimony of that gratitude and respect, with which I have the honour to subscribe myself,

"Madam,

"Your most obliged,

"And obedient humble servant,

"ANDREW MILLAR."

At this critical juncture, the absence of Mr. Sheridan in Ireland upon necessary business, made it harder for Mrs. Sheridan to sustain this unlooked-for blow in her literary career; as she was accustomed on every occasion to look up

to her husband for consolation, guidance, and support.

That she felt deeply this disappointment to her interest and her fame is evident, from the manner in which she alludes to the circumstance in the subjoined "Ode to Patience:" "Though by *injurious foes* borne down," &c. In this stanza it is placed first in order, though it was, at the time of writing the poem, the *last* event that had occurred to exercise the fortitude and equanimity of Mrs. Sheridan.

ODE TO PATIENCE.

UNAWED by threats, unmoved by force,
My steady soul pursues her course,
Collected, calm, resign'd.
Say, ye, who search with curious eyes,
The spring whence human actions rise,
Say, whence this turn of mind?

'Tis Patience.—Gentle Goddess, hail!
O, let thy votary's vows prevail,
Thy threaten'd flight to stay:

Long hast thou been a welcome guest,
Long reign'd an inmate in this breast,
And ruled with gentle sway.

Through all the various turns of fate,
Ordain'd me in each several state,
My wayward lot has known—
What taught me silently to bear,
To curb the sigh, to check the tear,
When sorrow weigh'd me down?

'Twas Patience.—Temperate Goddess, stay!
For still thy dictates I obey,
Nor yield to Passion's power;
Though by injurious foes borne down,
My fame, my toil, my hopes o'erthrown
In one ill-fated hour.

When robb'd of her I held most dear,
My hands adorned the mournful bier
Of her I loved so well:
What, when mute sorrow chain'd my tongue,
As o'er the sable hearse I hung,
Forbade the tide to swell?

'Twas Patience.—Goddess ever calm,
Oh! pour into my breast thy balm,
That antidote to pain:

* Which, flowing from thy nectar'd urn,
By chemistry divine can turn
Our losses into gain.

When sick, and languishing in bed,
Sleep from my restless couch had fled,
Sleep—which even pain beguiles :
What taught me calmly to sustain
A feverish being rack'd with pain,
And drest my looks in smiles?

'Twas Patience.—Heav'n-descended Maid,
Implored, flew swiftly to my aid,
And lent her fostering breast :
Watch'd my sad couch with parent care,
Repell'd th' approaches of Despair,
And sooth'd my soul to rest.

What, when dissever'd from his side,
My friend, protector, and my guide ;
When my prophetic soul,
Anticipating all the storm,
Saw danger in its direst form,
What could my fears controul?

* " Patience, sovereign o'er *transmuted* ill."
Vanity of Human Wishes.

'Twas Patience.—Gentle goddess, hear,
Be ever to thy suppliant near,
Nor let one murmur rise:
For still some mighty joys are given,
Dear to her soul, the gifts of heaven,
The sweet domestic ties.

This, if merely a poetic boast, would have had little to recommend it; but it becomes an interesting picture of the consolations of poetry and philosophy to an elegant mind, when we refer to the character of the author, whose children remember her to have ever soothed, by her unchangeable mildness, the severest irritations of spirits in her husband; while her understanding, when he consulted it, was sure to add new lights to his own.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan were in the habit of writing poetry for their amusement. Very little of Mr. Sheridan's manuscript compositions in verse remain. A copy of verses on Mrs. Woffington's inimitable performance of "Phædra," written by him with all the fire and discrimination of kindred genius, appeared in an Irish

collection, and was much admired at the time; but I have not been able to recover it. The one with which I venture to present the reader, is short, and of a lighter cast. It has the merit of being historical, and is the literal versification of the genuine reply of a dutiful young gentleman to his maternal ancestor.

EPIGRAM,

BY THOMAS SHERIDAN, A.M.

(Being the Answer of the Hon. John Spencer to his Grandmother, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.)

With her offspring around, as she sat at a feast,
Old Sarah, delighted, thus said to each guest:
"Fill your glasses, my lads, and drink health to the root,
"Whence so many fair branches thus thrivingly shoot."
"Ah Madam!" quoth Jack, with a bow most profound,
"The branches ne'er thrive, while the root's above ground."

While inserting miscellaneous pieces, I am tempted here to add an Apologue, composed by Dr. Sheridan when a youth, at the request of his father, and never published in any former collection.

AFFLICTION,

An Apologue.

As Affliction one day sat on the sea-shore, she leaned her head on her hand, and seemed to cast her eye at a distance on the swelling ocean. Wave succeeded to wave, and tear after tear stole down her pallid cheek. The polished pebbles, intermingled with shells of unfading colours, drew her attention, while her imagination traced a variety of pictures in the fortuitous assemblage. As Affliction has amusements, as well as other affections of the mind, she traced a figure on the shining sand with a branch of willow, which she called Man. Jupiter happened to pass that way, and was so struck with the ease and proportion of the lineaments, that he inspired the figure with life. A contest now arose. The Earth claimed the image, as having furnished the materials that composed it. Affliction cried, "it is mine; your materials were of no value till I traced the form." Lastly Jupiter preferred his claim, as having called that

form into life and motion. The Gods having heard every argument the claimants could urge, pronounced this solemn decree: "Man shall be the property of Affliction during his life. When he ceases to breathe, the materials of which his frame is composed shall return to earth; while his spirit shall ascend to inhabit the celestial regions, justly restored to Jupiter who bestowed it."

The Spring of 1764 brought Mrs. Sheridan some consolation after her numerous trials. Mr. Sheridan, who had been playing with great *éclat* in Dublin through the winter, returned to her; and though in Ireland he had experienced a good deal of the perfidy and villainy of mankind, he had received from the fair sex a distinguished compliment, to which he was peculiarly sensible. On his re-appearance in the character of Hamlet, Nov. 11, 1763, Lady Northumberland* (whose husband had just been appointed Lord Lieutenant) stood up

* The Lady Elizabeth, daughter of the Duke of Somerset, and afterwards justly distinguished as the great and good Duchess of Northumberland.

in her box, upon which all the ladies present followed her example, and welcomed Mr. Sheridan by the very unusual and marked tribute of personal applause.

Of the virtues of women in general, Mr. Sheridan had a very favourable opinion, and he was often heard to observe, that in the distressing vicissitudes of his fortune, he had met, in his female friends, with more generosity, more disinterestedness, and far greater steadiness of attachment than among men. The female heart did not grow cold at the aspect of calamity, and the sympathies of woman were ever ready at the call of unmerited distress.

Once restored to her friend and protector, Mrs. Sheridan did not let her dramatic disappointment weigh heavily upon her spirits; for we find her accompanying her husband to Bath and Bristol, where he gave lectures on oratory; and where she, with the vivid susceptibility to innocent pleasures which is often the attribute of a virtuous mind, became quite an enthusiast for the merit of the Linleys.

It was there that Mrs. Sheridan became first acquainted with that interesting family. Possessing a fine voice, and a considerable taste in music, she availed herself of this opportunity to take lessons in singing from Mr. Linley. The peculiar expression and pathos that mark the Linley and Jackson school, opened a new world of harmony to her senses, of which she was never weary: her enthusiasm continued, on returning alone with her daughter to London, and the eldest Miss Sheridan, who slept with her mother, remembered being kept awake during the night by Mrs. Sheridan's repeating the last song she had learnt from Linley.*

* "In a vale clothed with woodlands," &c.

Never perhaps was there a family so highly gifted in its numerous members. When Thomas Linley (the lamented Lycidas of Mrs. Elizabeth Sheridan's poem) was a very little boy, he was already a proficient on the violin. A gentleman who had been complimenting the elder Mr. Linley upon the dawning talents of his charming daughters, observing little Tom, asked him, "Are you, too, musical, my little man?" "Oh yes, Sir," replied Tom Linley with *naïveté*, "We are all geniuses!"

While Mrs. Sheridan was thus employing her moments of leisure, her husband was received with the greatest marks of civility by the Bristolians: who, however they may have been vilified for want of taste, by literary people of irregular habits or immoral principles, left on Mr. Sheridan's mind a strong impression of the urbanity, politeness, and good sense of that distinguished and wealthy community.

A copy of verses upon Mr. Sheridan, by a very young lady of that city, was handed to the Orator; who read them, liked them, and prophecied favourably of the poetic talents of the fair author. There is something interesting in the first efforts of youthful genius, particularly in a female, which lays hold of the mind, and inspires a fond partiality, not to be afterwards renewed by more laboured and finished productions. Mr. Sheridan on this occasion, however, proved not to be blinded by self-love, or propitiated by flattery, for the muse whose first lisping accents were in *his* praise at the age of timid and blushing fifteen, has since approved

herself honourably to the world in the numerous and valuable productions of Miss Hannah More.

On leaving Bristol, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to Richmond, where he remained a few days on a visit to his friend Mr. Aikenhead, while Mrs. Sheridan was in London preparing for their expedition to Scotland. During this visit to London, the life of Mrs. Sheridan was endangered by an accident, for which she was ever afterwards careful to avoid giving occasion. Being deeply engaged, one night, reading in bed, she was so interested in her book that she did not perceive a part of the curtain had taken fire till aroused from her abstraction by a smell of burning. She then hastily called for assistance, which was administered just in time to prevent the bed-clothes from being in a blaze. Mrs. Sheridan from that time forward ever avoided the absurd and dangerous indulgence of reading in bed by candle-light.

Edinburgh was, both to Mrs. Sheridan and her husband, a scene of very agreeable remem-

brances. In a visit paid about two years before to that city, Mr. Sheridan had met in public with the most distinguished approbation of his plans, and in private with the most flattering attentions from individuals. He could reckon among his encouragers the first names the period had to boast for virtue and talent; and had received the high honour of the freedom of the city, which was presented to him by the hands of Dr. Robertson, the historian. Mrs. Sheridan, too, had formed some pleasing private friendships; among which was Lady Maxwell, of whose talents and understanding she conceived so high an opinion, that she could have felt no surprise had she lived to witness the powers of mind, and versatility of acquirement, of that lady's most distinguished daughter, the late Duchess of Gordon.

The course of lectures Mr. Sheridan had to deliver in Edinburgh detained him in that city till August.

Learning that he could live much more reasonably in France upon the pension it pleased

his Majesty graciously to allow him, it had long been Mr. Sheridan's intention, as soon as peace between the two countries should render such a plan feasible, to retire thither for a time, and recruit his finances. Different reasons had hitherto frustrated this plan; but in September, 1764, he put it in execution, and embarked for Calais; taking with him his wife, his two daughters, and his eldest son, Charles Francis Sheridan.

CHAPTER VIII.

Right Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan.—Anecdotes of Richard Brinsley at Harrow.—Journey of Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan in France.—Baptiste.—Paris.—Hotel de Picardie.—Clairon.—Blois.—Whimsical Inducement to Mr. Sheridan to settle there.—Story of Mademoiselle Hemin.—The Cottage of the Loire.—Correction of a Misconstruction in the "Memoirs" of R. B. Sheridan.—Madame Des Combes.—Comic Anecdotes.—Story of Poor Robin.—Respect shewn to Mr. Sheridan by the travelling English.—Friendliness of the French.—Anecdote of Father Mark.—Melancholy story of an English Lady.—Extraordinary Anecdote of another Lady.—Family of Montigny.

The paternal anxiety of Mr. Sheridan on leaving Richard behind him, for all his children were inexpressibly dear to him, was alleviated by the consideration that he was under the care of the Rev. Dr. Robert Sumner, his best friend. The intimacy between them began, as has been before related, during Mr. Sheridan's residences at Windsor, when Dr. Sumner was a master at Eton; and it was so great, that whenever Dr.

Sumner went up to town, and Mr. Sheridan was in the country, the confidential servant left in his lodgings had orders to get them in readiness the same as for her master; and Dr. Sumner made Mr. Sheridan's home his temporary abode.

Dr. Sumner, now head master of Harrow School, repaid this kindness by the particular attention he paid to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who had been placed there about two years before; he had him an inmate of his house, and in every way supplied the place of a parent to him. In the Memoirs of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, pages 162, 163, 164, &c., an idea is given that he passed through his school course without credit or approbation. That a boy might not be an attentive student at Harrow, and yet afterwards dazzle the world with his astonishing abilities, we have proof irrefragable; but Richard, though not distinguished for regular application, was far from deserving or incurring the neglect hinted by his biographer, p. 167: "Richard Brinsley Sheridan was in his eighteenth year when he quitted Harrow; where

he neither formed any particular friendships, nor left behind him any pleasing marks of remembrance." — *Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of R. B. Sheridan.*

This is not correct: Mr. R. B. Sheridan was only in his seventeenth year when he quitted Harrow. The assertion that he formed no friendships is equally ill grounded, as he retained several pleasing juvenile intimacies; the objects of which were afterwards kindly received at his father's house. Sir William Jones, Messrs. Glanville, Horne, Cummings, and Halhed, the orientalist, were among his principal intimates. Here I have the advantage of quoting the testimony of the Reverend Dr. Parr, who kindly permits me to make use of his own words on the occasion, with regard to the general estimation in which Richard Brinsley Sheridan was held at Harrow:—"This I well remember: though neither masters nor boys looked upon Sheridan as a good scholar, they one and all liked him; and the minds of all were impressed with an indistinct notion that his natural powers were uncommonly great."

Richard Brinsley was in some degree instructed by Dr. Parr, then the first assistant in Harrow School. The care of his pecuniary concerns, in the absence of his parents, devolved on his maternal uncle, Mr. Richard Chamberlaine; and though he, of course, allowed his nephew every reasonable indulgence, a little incident which happened at that time placed Richard Brinsley's love of frolic, opposed to his uncle's prudent economy, in a ludicrous point of view. On occasion of the grand annual contest for the silver arrow, Richard Brinsley was not a competitor for the prize of archery; but distinguished himself by the delivery of a Greek oration. This, as he was intended for one of the learned professions, was a very judicious arrangement, as it exhibited his proficiency in scholarship; and, in the embarrassed state of his father's circumstances, was far preferable to a frivolous competition, which involved a considerable degree of expense. So perhaps reasoned Mr. Richard Chamberlaine; but if he did so, his nephew was determined to

disappoint the old gentleman in any economical views he might have had in favouring this arrangement. The Greek oration was to be delivered in the character of a military commander; and as the notions of costume were not so strict in those days as they are at present, Richard Brinsley, of his own authority, ordered the uniform of an English general officer to be made up for the occasion. Accordingly, on the important day he appeared, not, indeed, in the elegant dress of an archer of Harrow; but in the equally expensive one of a military chief. Mr. Chamberlaine, to whom of course his tailor's bill was delivered, severely remonstrated with him on this unexpected piece of extravagance. Sheridan respectfully replied, that, as the speech was to be delivered in a martial character, he did not think the effect would have been complete without an appropriate dress; and that indeed so deeply was he himself impressed with that feeling, that he was sure if he had not been properly habited, he could not have delivered a word of the oration.

What necessary connexion there was between Greek and scarlet and gold regimentals, poor Mr. Chamberlaine could not exactly see; he was obliged, however, to overlook his nephew's vanity and love of shew, not without a shrewd suspicion that the pleasure of *hoaxing* him had a share in Brinsley's suddenly declared martial taste.

Mr. Aikenhead, a splendid West-Indian, who had a villa at Richmond, was, with his lady, among those who, in the absence of his parents, paid the greatest attention to Richard Brinsley. This Mr. Aikinhead was an old friend of Mr. Sheridan's, and all the vacations of his son were spent either at the town or country residence of that gentleman, who is well known as an amateur of fashion in the literary and theatrical history of the day. If Richard Brinsley was thus beloved by his masters, school-fellows, and acquaintances, he was no less fortunate in conciliating the regard of persons in an humbler sphere: Mrs. Purdon, the respectable housekeeper at Harrow, showed him, during his resi-

dence there, the attentions of a mother. After he had left school a considerable time, and was at Bath, this worthy woman had the misfortune to lose a little daughter, of whom Richard Brinsley had been remarkably fond: as a friend, who she felt assured would take an interest in her misfortune, Mrs. Purdon sent Mr. Sheridan on this occasion a mourning ring; and he, who was possessed of much native tenderness of heart, was greatly affected, both on hearing of the untimely death of the child, and receiving this testimony of the remembrance of his humble friend. As for Dr. Sumner himself, Mr. R. B. Sheridan ever remembered him with sentiments of the highest gratitude, regard and veneration; and on the death of that enlightened and distinguished man, bewailed him with the affection he owed to a second parent.*

* P. 535, "Memoirs of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan," it is said, "In an early part of these Memoirs *some doubt* was expressed respecting his claim to the version of the Love Epistles of Aristenætus; but subsequent information has

 confirmed

To return from this long digression to the principal subject of our narrative.

The elder Mr. Sheridan, in order to accommodate his family, travelled in a coach, and had also a post-chaise. At Calais he was encountered by a poor fellow, *soi-disant* Italian, though his name of Baptiste rather bespoke him of Gallic origin, who besought Mr. Sheridan's permission to accompany him to Paris in the quality of domestic; alleging as

confirmed his right to a share in that translation, in conjunction with Mr. Halhed, the orientalist."

Now the passage alluded to is in the first volume, and is as follows:

"He is said by one of his biographers to have joined with another gentleman, in translating the Epistles of Aristenætus from the Greek. There was indeed a version of that writer's letters published by Wilkie, in the year 1771; but though it is not unlikely that Richard Sheridan might have had some concern in polishing the language, or correcting the sheets for the press, it is *certain* that he had not *the smallest share* in the translation."—Watkins's Memoirs, p. 171—2.

Now this appears to us rather a strong manner of expressing "*some* doubt."

his reason, that if allowed to pass for an English gentleman's servant, he need only travel on horseback, but otherwise the arbitrary impositions of the French landlords would oblige him to take a guide, an additional expense he could very ill afford. In all modern books of travels we are warned against the officiousness of these adventurers, who offer their services with a boldness and pertinacity truly astonishing to us reserved islanders; but Mr. Sheridan, who possessed a great fund of good-nature, could not find it in his heart to refuse the poor fellow's request; and as for utility, Baptiste, if his own word might be taken, was equal to La Fleur for excellence in every department.

At the end of the first day's journey, Baptiste presented himself officiously at the *portière*, to assist the family to alight. The first person it was his lot to hand out was the eldest Miss Sheridan; and though she was at that time a slight young girl, her supporter gave way beneath her weight, and down came poor Baptiste and the affrighted young lady together.

This was an unpromising beginning, but Baptiste was profuse in his apologies. The truth now appeared: that of whatever other perfections as a domestic he might be possessed, following his master as a groom was not one of them, for he alleged in his excuse that he was tired and jaded to death; adding, in a most doleful tone, "Ah, Sir! I never in my life was so long upon one horse before." Other accomplishments as useful as horsemanship were, however, displayed by Baptiste: to a family imperfectly acquainted with the French language he proved invaluable; and during Mr. Sheridan's short stay in Paris he so recommended himself by his dexterity, understanding and attention, as to render a *valet de place* wholly an unnecessary addition to his establishment.

Leaving his family at the inn, Mr. Sheridan's first care at Paris was to look out lodgings for them; and having fixed on handsome apartments in the Hôtel de Picardie, he sent Baptiste to convey his wife and children thither. Having seen the family safe into the carriage, Baptiste

directed the postillion by simply saying "Hôtel de Picardie." Mrs. Sheridan, who understood French very imperfectly, heard only the word "Picardie," and was instantly seized with the wildest and most insupportable alarms: all that she had read and heard of arrests and arbitrary imprisonments in the country in which they had sought an asylum, recurred to her terrified imagination. They had passed through Picardy in their way to Paris; and she now fancied she was to be compelled, with her children, to return thither, while her husband was forcibly conveyed to some different destination, far from her soothing affection, which always desired to share with him every danger. Her ignorance of the language, the habit she had of relying in every difficulty on the presence of her husband, the unhappiness of mind that she had long experienced from finding the most honourable intentions insufficient to preserve him from the gripe of ruthless creditors, all tended to foster this illusion. She had sufficient command over her feelings to conceal these agonizing appre-

hensions from her children during the course of their short drive; but when they stopped at the hotel, and Mr. Sheridan, who was always a good and gay traveller, welcomed them with some exultation, to the handsome lodgings he had so speedily procured for them, he found Mrs. Sheridan unable any longer to support herself. The strong revulsion of joy at seeing him well and in security, had proved too much for her, and she was seized in the hall of the hotel with violent hysterics. The strength of Mrs. Sheridan's frame was insufficient to cope with the deep sensibilities of her mind; but for this strong sensibility she had fortitude sufficient to sustain the severest trials: it was in this point alone she was vulnerable; and in the midst of all her assumed self-command, remained a female, subject to all the cruel alarms and sufferings that distinguish the feminine character.

Mr. Sheridan remained about ten days at Paris, seeing every thing most worthy of notice. He was particularly struck with the acting of the "sublime Clairon;" and upon afterwards

becoming acquainted with Mrs. Siddons, often compared the styles of those two celebrated actresses, who, in his opinion, came nearer to perfection than any he had ever beheld. He then proceeded with his family to Blois. Mr. Sheridan was at first uncertain what stay he should make there; a trifling incident helped to determine him.

"When you have no decided will of your own," says the agreeable author of the Diary of an Invalid, "the best way I believe is to commit yourself to the tide of events."—Such at the time was the case with Mr. Sheridan. He had determined on retiring into France, but was as yet undecided in what part of it he might finally settle. While he and Mrs. Sheridan were taking some refreshment and repose, his eldest daughter, with the liveliness of childhood, anxious to explore the beauties of a scene so novel to her, took her little sister by the hand and quitted the inn. They had not proceeded far when they were alarmed by the face of a little old woman at a window, so puckered and wrinkled that it gave her exactly the ap-

pearance of a witch or little old fairy, who, both by signs and by calling endeavoured to induce them to stop. Frightened at her appearance, they only redoubled their speed, when a noise of steps sounding from behind, convinced them the little old lady had not given up her purpose, and they were speedily overtaken by a decent looking man, who respectfully apologized for the alarm he had given them, but said he was deputed by the lady who lodged with him to induce them to turn back and enter his house. Convinced by the man's manner that no harm was intended, and urged by a little curiosity, the children, no longer terrified, consented to turn back with him. They were received very graciously by the old lady, who informed them in broken English that she was their country-woman; that observing them from the window, and seeing by their dress they were English girls, she could not deny herself the pleasure (so long unknown to her) of conversing with some one from her dear country. She then set fruit before them; and, contriving to make

herself intelligible, although, owing to her long absence from England, her language was scarcely so, she asked them who they were, whence they came, and whether their parents intended to fix their residence at Blois, or were merely passing through it. To the first questions the children returned satisfactory answers: as to the latter, they replied very truly that they were ignorant of the intentions of their parents. "Well, my dears," said the interrogator, "if you will let me see your father perhaps I may be of use to him." Having devoted a few moments more to "make a toilette," that is, to exchange a morning jacket of cotton for a little silk negligée, this singular being set out with the two Miss Sheridans for the inn where their parents had stopped. Introduced to Mr. Sheridan, she informed him with a low courtesy that she was a "poor little English *girl*;" for so Mademoiselle Hemin, having almost forgot her English, translated "fille," or "demoiselle," being an unmarried woman. Her father Monsieur Hemin (perhaps the right way

of spelling it, would have been Heming or Hemmings) was an English Jacobite officer, who had followed the fortunes of James the Second. On his death, the French government, compassionating the forlorn situation of his surviving daughter, had gratified her with a very small pension. But, alas! poor Mademoiselle Hemin was one of those whom, as Fontenelle said of himself, death seemed to have forgotten. She lived on to extreme old age, beyond the memory of the first granters of her little provision, and the French government wisely concluding that if she was not dead, she *ought* to have been so, had for some time past struck her name out of the pension list. From that period she had supported herself chiefly by the very small and humble trade of pricking thimbles!—Yet though arrived almost at the verge of existence and grown down to the size of a little child, she still preserved her cheerfulness, and exhibited the dress and manners of a gentlewoman.

On repeating to Mr. Sheridan the same questions she had asked his daughters respecting

his stay, Mr. Sheridan replied that he was undecided; and Mademoiselle Hemin, who saw a prospect of advantage to herself in the neighbourhood of her compatriots, used every argument to determine his choice in favour of Blois. "Sir," said she, with an accent of insinuation, "if you determined on remaining here, I could give you a good house, I could give you a good garden, good wine," &c. and continued to enumerate her power of bestowing several other advantages. Mr. Sheridan looked with surprise at this little Fairy Good-will, who, like her prototypes, though, herself, apparently feeble, old, and poor, pretended to the power of endowing others with every thing desirable. He soon found that Mademoiselle Hemin, in her imperfect English, had substituted the word "give" for "recommend," and that she meant she could *point out to him* where all the good things she enumerated were to be found. Having so far come to an understanding, Mr. Sheridan availed himself of her long residence at Blois to obtain information, and found

Mademoiselle Hemin as good as her word; for she answered his enquiries so satisfactorily, that he was induced to take a cottage and garden, which she recommended to him, and soon found himself commodiously settled with his family on the Banks of the Loire. Here he found all the advantages of fine air, salubrity, and cheap living, that he had promised himself, in retiring into France, and here, (notwithstanding some misconceptions that have arisen relative to his letters and opinions) he spent two of the happiest years of his life.

The misconception I would particularly refer to, occurs in Dr. Watkins, p. 124, relative to a passage in a letter written from France by Mr. Sheridan, and beginning, "I have had a long fit of my old disorder," which the Doctor naturally enough concludes to mean "low spirits," and, reasoning upon these premises, thus proceeds:

"From another letter to the same gentleman, (Samuel Whyte) it appears that the change of place and leisure for literary employment, could

not erase the impression of misfortunes which in a considerable degree were the consequences of his own imprudence. *He affected philosophy while he was tortured with impatience*, and *it is evident* that the writer of this epistle was at the time of his composing it labouring under Hypochondriasis."

The expressions from which the biographer deduces this inference, are as follow:

"This malady is to me of the most mortifying nature in the world; for at a time when I was pushing on vigorously a work which it is of the utmost importance to me to finish as soon as possible, it puts as effectual a stop to my progress as if it had deprived me of the use of my hands.

"*Its nature is to take the mind prisoner and bind up all the faculties.*

"The least attention even to the writing of a letter becomes then an insupportable fatigue."

Now these passages, which the biographer applies to Hypochondria, were no other than the description of a severe oppression of the

head and stomach, to which Mr. Sheridan was subject, and which is often the consequence of intense mental application. It was aggravated in after life by violent and repeated bilious attacks. This was entirely a bodily disorder, though of a nature, as he describes it, to forbid for the time any degree of mental exertion. As to low spirits and gloom, though few had suffered severer disappointment than Mr. Sheridan, he possessed a mind remarkably free from such impressions. He had in general uniform and cheerful spirits, and an elasticity of mind that rose unsubdued from the repeated inflictions of misfortune.

The satisfaction he experienced at Blois from the health and visible improvement of his children forbade him to consider his retiring thither in that light. The French language was acquired with such facility by their young and flexible organs, that it soon became necessary to appropriate a day in the week to the remembrance and practice of their native English. For this easy attainment of the foreign idiom,

they were also much indebted to their constant intercourse with the owner of the cottage, Madame des Combes, who reserved one apartment in it for herself, and was always ready to assist her lodgers with every little friendly office in her power.

Madame des Combes was, as the French say, "*d'ailleurs la meilleure femme du monde,*" and possessed a very engaging simplicity.

On Mr. Sheridan's complimenting her on the strength of her eye-sight, which was such that she was able at a very advanced age to read and work without glasses, the old lady replied, "That some time before they came to Blois, her eyes had begun to fail, and she had, in consequence, bought a pair of spectacles. These were soon broken, and she was obliged to replace them with new ones. At length, having lost and broken a great many pair, she had given up the use of them altogether, and "le bon Dieu," knowing her to be a widow, and unable to afford to buy any more spectacles, had graciously restored her sight."

She delighted in the children's company, and often took them with her to public worship; for she could not be made to understand the differences in their religious opinions: and as whenever she had leisure in the week-days she liked to drop into the churches "*pour attraper un petit bout de messe,*" as she called it, she could not be persuaded but that it must be also an advantage to her young lodgers to hear it. In one respect her religious forbearance was put to a severe trial. Mr. Sheridan, in return for the civilities of Madame des Combes, used sometimes to invite her to dinner, and sometimes to send her part of any dish he knew she liked, from his own table. It would at times so happen that this dish was an excellent meat soup, and that Mr. Sheridan, from forgetfulness, sent it to his landlady on a Friday. On these occasions the *servante de cuisine* Manon, less hungry, or more zealous to observe the fasts of the church, would put it away with horror, exclaiming, "*Ah, madame, c'est gras!*"*

* It is made of flesh or meat.

The little old lady had then no other means of reconciling her conscience but by pointing to her ear, and exclaiming, "hem, hem!" to signify that she was deaf, and did not understand the intimation. Manon would then go up close to her, and bawl in her ear, "*Madame, c'est gras,*" but could never get any other answer from her mistress than "hem, hem!" to signify incurable deafness, accompanied by another sign to put the soup upon the table.

It is here that I ought to mention a little incident, which a sentimental French writer could dress up into a very pathetic story.

Among the various pets that the children were allowed to keep, the eldest Miss Sheridan had a favourite lamb, whom she had compassionately purchased to rescue him from the knife of the butcher. This lamb, whose name was Robin, was, during his nonage, the plaything of the whole family; but Robin in time grew to be a sheep, and evinced symptoms of a mischievous disposition: he munched and destroyed a variety of things in the house, but his protec-

tress, unwilling to proceed to extremities, and still entertaining hopes he might reform, continued to keep him as when he had been her favourite and innocent pet lamb. At length, however, Robin became so extremely troublesome, that he was, unknown to his mistress, sent to a distance from the house. That very night, at about twelve o'clock, a most piteous bleating was heard at the door of the cottage: this was Robin, who had found his way back to his gentle mistress again. Such an instance of attachment and *dog-like* sagacity wrought a wonderful change in his favour, and it was resolved not to banish him from the hospitable roof again.

A few days afterwards, however, Robin was found to have extended his depredations to some sheets of Mr. Sheridan's Dictionary, fairly written out for the press. This last enormity was not to be forgiven; again Robin was secretly disposed of. What his fate was, ever after remained a mystery, but it was suspected that he was restored to the original destina-

tion from which he had once been rescued. So strong was this impression upon the younger branches of the family, that for a considerable time they could not be prevailed on to touch a bit of mutton, lest they should happen unawares to dine upon a part of poor Robin.

Though Mr. Sheridan, upon retiring into France, had adopted a plan of rigid economy, as the only one suited to the disordered state of his affairs, and his high and honourable determination to indulge in no unnecessary expense, till he had enabled himself to satisfy the most impatient of his creditors, yet still he admitted to his plain but hospitable table such Englishmen as curiosity or inclination conducted to Blois. Among the young travelling English of consideration, who with their tutors made any stay in that place, none omitted to pay their respects to Mr. Sheridan; and he had the consolation, in his adversity, to observe himself universally the object of that regard and attention which his talents and unimpeached conduct deserved.

The superior cheapness of living enabled him to indulge in this hospitality without transgressing the limits of economy. Flowers, fruits and creams, added an air of luxury to the feast; and the guests, who met rather for the pleasure of friendly intercourse and conversation than the extravagant delicacies of the table, departed always satisfied with their entertainment and their host. At these friendly meetings the story of their unfortunate countrywoman, Mademoiselle Hemin, "the poor little English girl," was incidentally introduced by Mr. Sheridan; and though he had in general a just objection to levying contributions upon others, he did not scruple on this occasion to call upon these rich and generous young Englishmen; and a small subscription was set on foot, by which he had soon the pleasure of presenting to Mademoiselle Hemin the sum of thirty pounds: a little fortune to this simple and self-denied being. In order that his children might not, by living in a Roman Catholic country, forget or lose the religious impressions in which they were brought up, it

was the custom of Mr. Sheridan, as soon as he had established order in his little household, to read the service of the Church of England every Sunday in his own family: a service rendered additionally solemn and impressive by his excellent manner of delivery. This appeared to the English who visited Blois such an advantage, that they requested permission to join in the family worship; and thus Mr. Sheridan drew around him a small Protestant congregation, who met with the utmost seriousness and regularity.

At other times, however, differences of religion did not keep him apart from individuals; and Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan found, even in persons of monastic habits, an exemption from prejudice, that led them cheerfully to cultivate their acquaintance. The children frequently visited some friendly nuns, with whom they made an interchange of little presents; they went to school to some lay sisters, who were, however, bound by certain vows.* Mrs. Sheridan took

* They did not adopt the cloistral seclusion, but they

lessons in music from a Jesuit; and one of their frequent visitors was Father Mark, an Irish-French Capuchin.

This Father Mark, a very young man, gave occasion for a ludicrous anecdote. We have already mentioned the lameness of Mrs. Sheridan, which rendered the support of an arm necessary whenever she took an extended walk. This, so necessary support, was usually afforded by her husband, or Charles her son; it was also her custom, in walking, to make use of an ivory-headed cane. One day, having neglected this precaution, and Mr. Sheridan being at some distance from her, in an excursion they were making in the environs of the town, Mrs. Sheridan made a sign to Father Mark, who was of the party, to come over and give her his arm. As he took no notice of this, she called him to her, and repeated her request; but the young monk, drawing back with horror, exclaimed with a strong Irish brogue, "My character,

were bound to celibacy, and took a vow of devoting themselves to education and other good works.

ma'am! You don't consider my reputation." Mrs. Sheridan, who sometimes was subject to absence of mind, had quite forgot the monastic etiquette, that forbade one of a religious profession to offer his arm to a woman; and Father Mark appears to have been one of that number of precisians who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel; for soon after thus refusing his needful support to Mrs. Sheridan, lest he should endanger his reputation, he eloped from his convent, threw off the frock, and established himself in some secular employment in his native country of Ireland.

I have already mentioned, that there was a purity of mind and sincerity of manner about Mrs. Sheridan, that rendered others unwilling to deceive her. A very singular instance of conscientiousness of this sort occurred during her residence at Blois. On her first settling there she had been visited by a lady, who went by the name of the widow of an English gentleman, and who was highly respected as such, for the excellence of her conduct. She was beautiful in person, and

elegant in her manners, and a shade of melancholy that she never could conquer, only rendered her more interesting in the eyes of Mrs. Sheridan, who formed a speedy intimacy with her. Some time after this intercourse of friendship had taken place, the lady informed Mrs. Sheridan, with tears, that she repented having forced her friendship upon her, for that it was impossible to deceive her any longer. She was not what she appeared, nor deserving of the respect and estimation in which she was held at Blois by the deceived inhabitants. The unhappy lady then proceeded to state that she was by birth an Englishwoman of good family, and engaged to marry a gentleman of equal rank and prospects with her own; but that he, after basely abusing the confidence reposed in him, had broken off with her when on the point of marriage, and only made an allowance for herself and daughter, on condition of her retiring into France under a borrowed name. Thus were the apparently fortunate prospects of this beautiful young creature blasted in a moment. Thrown

off by her justly offended family, she had followed the cruel advice of her lover, who, at the time of her making this communication, enjoyed a high military rank in England, and regularly remitted to her the promised stipend. With one old and faithful servant, who was alone acquainted with the unhappy story, this lady had fixed upon Blois as the place of her retreat; where for seventeen years she had conducted herself in a manner so exemplary, as to conciliate the respect of all the inhabitants; and though from her beauty she had received several advantageous offers of marriage, she had steadily refused them, from a principle of honour, and also of perseverance in her first and ill-requited attachment. "Such a protracted period of suffering," resumed the lady, "in which I have endeavoured by strictness of conduct to retrieve the error of my youth, seemed, to myself, to give me a title to respect; but there is something in you, madam, that forbids me to impose a faulty character for a virtuous one. Can you, after this candid confession, continue to me

your friendship ?" It was not in a disposition like Mrs. Sheridan's to refuse an appeal made under circumstances that admitted of so many palliations; she warmly assured her unfortunate countrywoman of the continuance of her good-will; and this mutual regard continued unbroken till Mrs. Sheridan's death.

This forms, however, an exception, not an example, of Mrs. Sheridan's usual conduct in friendship. In general, the conscientiousness of her own mind forbade her forming an intimacy with any one, the purity of whose principles was not equal to her own.

A lady whom she had highly regarded, lost her husband in America, by the cruel circumstance of his falling into the hands of the torturing savages, who inflicted on him before he expired the most dreadful torments. The widow, in the first agonies of grief and horror, upon receiving this shocking account, knelt down, and solemnly imprecated every sort of evil on her own head if she formed a second en-

gagement; she particularly prayed that she might die within the year.

Notwithstanding this, it will hardly be believed that, not very long after her first husband's death, this ill-fated lady was persuaded to take another! Mrs. Sheridan, justly shocked at the infringement of vows so solemnly attested, would never thenceforward hold any communication with her former friend. In concluding this anecdote, I hope it will not be considered as any encouragement to superstition to observe, that the lady died within the year she had herself assigned for the duration of her impious engagement.

Of French families, the only one with which Mr. Sheridan contracted any intimacy was that of Colonel Montigny, a Canadian, well-known as a sufferer in the cause of loyalty in the American war. The intimacy was brought about in a manner unforeseen by Mr. Sheridan; but as the Colonel and his family, like himself, occupied a house on the banks of the Loire, it was natural for it to take place.

The celebrated Colonel Montigny, after having expended, in the American war of 1756, a handsome property in the cause of French loyalty, had retired upon the cession of Canada, with impaired health and a reduced fortune, to end his days in France. His family consisted of a wife, three sons, and one daughter; and the King, in consideration of his losses and services, had honoured him with the Cross of St. Louis, and allowed him a pension, equivalent in England to about two hundred pounds a year: a liberality which was much admired, being said to be the largest pension that had been ever accorded in France to mere merit.

As the house occupied by Mr. Sheridan was at but a small distance from Colonel Montigny's, his children often passed by the door of the Colonel: who was not long in forming a particular intimacy with the youngest. He used frequently to stop, and make her little presents of sweetmeats, &c., at the same time that he often asked her questions respecting her parents and family. One day he missed her, and her

absence continuing for several mornings successively, he became uneasy for the health and welfare of his little friend.

The fact was as the good Colonel suspected. Mr. Sheridan's youngest child, Miss Elizabeth Sheridan, had been seized with an aguish complaint, very common at Blois, which confined her to her bed. The morning after Colonel Montigny received this intelligence, Mr. Sheridan, on going up to pay his usual visit to his sick child, found the seat by her bed-side occupied by a tall, sun-burnt, military looking figure, habited in a short jacket (a common morning dress with French gentlemen), which did not add much to the advantages of his appearance. This was Colonel Montigny, the defender of Canada, whom compassion had led to visit the fevered couch of a suffering child. He had found the doors open, as in those countries is frequently the case from the warmth of the climate, and as his little neighbour could no longer visit him, had, with the French freedom and friendliness of manner, come to pay her a

visit in person. The Colonel rose courteously at Mr. Sheridan's approach, and informed him of the friendship contracted in the open air with his youngest daughter, which had led to the present friendly visit. Such a combination of circumstances could not have taken place in any country, where different manners prevailed. This whimsical introduction was, however, productive of the happiest consequences, and proved the commencement of an intimacy equally agreeable to both parties.

Madame Montigny had never recovered her spirits from the loss of fortune her husband sustained in America; she, however, found consolation in the soothing society of Mrs. Sheridan. Mademoiselle Montigny, her daughter, (afterwards distinguished at Blois as a celebrated belle) was all life and spirits. She was not at that time beautiful, but had rather what may be denominated a pretty and whimsical countenance; with such a wonderful activity, that Mr. Sheridan gave her, in allusion to her Indian birth, and the oddity and suddenness of her

motions, the surname of "Friday." This was translated to Mademoiselle Montigny, who did not understand a word of English: but still as she had never read Robinson Crusoe, she was as much in the dark as ever, and would often exclaim "*Friday, c'est Vendredi: mais pourquoi me donner le nom de Vendredi—pourquoi pas Samedi?*" With this friendly group Mrs. Sheridan passed many happy hours. Sometimes they would go and partake of a little regale at a fine garden Mr. Sheridan possessed at a small distance from the cottage. On one of these occasions Mrs. Sheridan, who, as I mentioned before, possessed a fine voice, and an ear for music, and who had improved by the instructions of her friend the Jesuit on the Spanish guitar, sung to the company, accompanying the guitar with her voice. Some persons in the neighbouring garden, attracted by her performance, which was in an arbour, ranged themselves on the wall to listen to her, and made a sign to her youngest daughter not to betray them.

All that Mr. Sheridan anticipated from the effects of a milder climate on his wife *appeared* to be happily realized: and such was the benefit Mrs. Sheridan seemed to derive from the uncommon purity of the air, that during the first year of her residence at Blois she enjoyed better health than she had done for ten years before.

CHAPTER IX.

Literary Occupations of Mrs. Sheridan resumed.—Critique on the Second Part of Sidney Biddulph.—Singular Origin of Nourjahad.—Miss Sophia Lee, Author of Canterbury Tales.—"Trip to Bath."—Examination into the reports about that Comedy.—Mr. Sheridan obliged to go to Ireland.—Decline of Mrs. Sheridan's health.—Amiable disposition and resignation in her sufferings.—Religious bigotry of her attendants.—Trials of Mrs. Sheridan on her Death-bed.—Death.—Respect paid by the French to her Remains.

Mrs. Sheridan availed herself of this interval of returning health to renew her literary occupations. In the space of two years she conceived and executed the beautiful oriental tale of Nourjahad, and added two additional volumes to the novel of Sidney Biddulph, which were not published till after her decease. To the two last volumes of Sidney Biddulph may be applied much of the criticism which was made upon the first part.

We meet our old acquaintances Sidney and Sir George again: with only those differences which we should observe in different portraits taken of the same individuals in youth or middle life. The additional personages introduced chiefly consist of the younger Faulkland, son of Orlando, the Audleys, the venerable Price (who was only introduced in the preceding volumes), and the sweet characters of Mrs. Arnold's two daughters.

By many persons the second part of Sidney Biddulph was preferred to the first; as the production of a person who had acquired more extensive views of life, and a greater insight into character. Her talent for portrait-painting had certainly improved; and the following character of the younger Faulkland given by his friend Sir Edward Audley, would not disgrace the most celebrated models of the country in which that style of writing was brought to perfection:

"It is harder to delineate the traces of this young man's mind than of any one's I have ever yet known. I have sometimes thought

this proceeded from the same cause that extremely delicate faces are the hardest to be drawn. He has no strong lines in his soul, and, if I may use the expression, all the features of it are faint. I do not think him capable of a manly or steady friendship towards one of his own sex, or of a violent or constant attachment towards one of yours;" (the letter is addressed to his sister) "yet is he the most engaging and agreeable companion in the world amongst men, and would, to a woman, appear a warm and sincere lover.—He likes pleasure, yet enters not into it with that juvenile ardour so natural to one of his age; he even sometimes commits excesses, but it seems as if he were led into them more from the force of example than the strength of his passions. He is at times idle without being dissipated, and at others busy without being studious. He will deny no favour that you can ask of him: yet he appears not much obliged for those which are granted to him.—In short he does the best and the worst things with equal indifference. He loves

expence, yet he by no means despises money; and I have seen him generous and niggardly in the same hour; hasty in forming resolutions, and as ready to break them. He has an infinite deal of vanity; but he has still more art in concealing it: and I believe that I am the first who ever discovered that he had either. With all this, he has very good sense, and an address, insinuating beyond any thing I ever met with. His faults seem all complexional, so are his virtues too, for he is neither right nor wrong upon principle, and it appears a moot point whether nature intended him for an angel or a devil."—(Sidney Biddulph, vol. iv.)

In this portrait, sketched in France, there are characteristic touches that might be compared for discrimination with those of a De Retz, or a La Bruyere. But it is in the deathbed of the pious and suffering heroine, in the closing scene of Sidney's eventful life, that the author sets her seal upon the whole, and illustrates her finely expressed moral, that it is in a future state of retribution alone, we can hope for an ex-

planation of the ways of Providence, and that there we shall see all apparently unequal dispensations justified, and all seeming inconsistencies reduced to rule. When every worldly comfort vanishes from the sufferer's view, we see Religion, like a distant star, shining to light the pure and unpretending saint, to receive the rich reward long laid up for her virtues in Heaven. Though the last moments of Sidney are accompanied by every circumstance of bitterness that the ingratitude of those she loved, and the disappointment of her fondest hopes could impart, yet we find her firm and collected, and at the same time divested of none of her wonted tenderness. After a scene of most affecting pathos, which it would be injuring to attempt to abridge, she is in the midst of some affectionate injunctions to her remaining family, when the sudden and awful, yet blessed transition from life to death, or rather from a living death to life, is thus powerfully and impressively described.

" She stopped short, as if interrupted by some sudden and extraordinary emotion; a fine co-

lour flushed at once into her face, and her eyes, which were before sunk and languishing, seemed in an instant to have recovered all their fire. I never saw so animated a figure; she sprung forward with energy, her arms extended, her eyes lifted up with rapture, and with an elevated voice she cried out, 'I COME!' Then, sinking down softly on her pillow, she closed her eyes, and expired without a sigh."

Surely it rather increases than detracts from the interest with which this passage must be read by every pious mind, to learn that it was not the creation of fancy, but the actual death-bed of a lady whom Mr. Richard Chamberlaine attended in the Isle of Man in his medical capacity, and communicated the affecting particulars to his sister.

Alas! she who could so well describe the last moments of expiring excellence, was shortly to be summoned from every tie that renders life endearing, to receive the reward of her own.

Mrs. Sheridan's last work was the oriental tale of Nourjahad. The plan was suggested to

her mind one sleepless night, when from reflecting upon the inequality in the conditions of men, she was led to consider that it is in the due regulation of the passions, rather than on the outward dispensations of Providence, that true happines or misery depends; and she conceived the idea of the probable condition of a human being of a violent and perverse disposition, supposing his wealth to be inexhaustible, and his days extended to infinity. In fancy she beheld this being, possessed of the two greatest apparent goods, riches and immortality, yet devoid of any inward principle to restrain the unbounded indulgence of his passions. Nourjahad finds in those gratified, yet still importunate passions, his tormentors, and the two blessings he had impatiently coveted transformed into insupportable evils. As this idea acquired form and consistency, Mrs. Sheridan represented it as entering her mind like a kind of vision or dream, between sleep and waking; and though this account is very extraordinary, persons of a fertile and poetical imagination themselves,

will see nothing impossible in it. She communicated the sketch of the story the next morning to her eldest daughter, whose promising talents and opening mind Mrs. Sheridan began to take great delight in cultivating. When, after the death of the author, the romantic eastern tale of Nourjahad appeared in print, Miss Alicia Sheridan perfectly recollected this circumstance of her mother's having related to her the outline of the tale before it was thrown upon paper, as complete as when it received its rich and interesting colouring.

The tale of Nourjahad was originally intended as the first of a series of instructive moral fictions, which the author was to have obtained permission to dedicate to His present Most Gracious Majesty, then the young Prince of Wales. Like Mrs. Sheridan's other works, Nourjahad has been dramatized. Miss Sophia Lee, author of the Canterbury Tales, Chapter of Accidents, &c., made a very elegant musical drama of it, which she read to Mrs. H. Lefanu; and another piece upon the same subject has been successfully brought upon the stage.

It will be seen by the dates, and by the facts in this narration, that the biographer of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan, was quite mistaken in fixing upon Windsor as the scene of the composition of Nourjahad.

" Windsor was a favourite place with his (Mr. Sheridan's) wife, who called it the seat of her inspiration. She *there* completed two of her works, the romantic tale of Nourjahad, &c." —*Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, vol. i. p.* 110. *By John Watkins, LL.D.*

At this distance of time, when newer works have of course laid hold of the attention of the public, a detailed account of all the testimonies of popularity with which the first and second parts of Sidney Biddulph were received both in France and England, would appear scarcely credible; one or two anecdotes may be permitted to the affectionate remembrance of the author's family.

When Mr. Sheridan was at Bath, in 1771-2, an old gentleman of the name of Adams took a

particular liking to his son Richard Brinsley, and shewed him many tokens of friendship; for this partiality he alleged as his original reason, not (as was the case with most of Mr. Sheridan's acquaintances) the agreeable manners and promising talents of the youth, but his being "the son of the author of Sidney Biddulph." Many ladies, venerable for their years, and distinguished for their rank in society, showed attention to Mr. Sheridan's daughters from the same partiality to their mother's interesting work; but the elder Mr. Sheridan received a more flattering, because totally unintended compliment to him on his wife's merit from another quarter. The first editions of Sidney Biddulph were published without the author's name, and therefore the person who addressed him did not know him to have been the husband of the writer she praised. This lady was a lively talkative French woman, the wife of a Parisian bookseller and publisher of the name of De l'Ormel. She had come over with her pretty daughter to England, *pour recueillir une*

succession, as the good man was unable to leave his business; but, like Lavinia Orthodox and her mother in the novel, who on a similar occasion received and spent the Doctor's legacy, one half in millinery, and the other half in the purchase of a spinet, Madame and Mademoiselle de l'Ormel found the temptations of London so numerous, that a great part of the money they were to receive was disbursed before their return to France. Having sufficiently amused themselves in London, it occurred to them that it would be a pity to leave England without seeing Bath; and there they had arrived to spend the remainder of the legacy, when they met Mr. Sheridan's family. Madame de l'Ormel told Mr. Sheridan several anecdotes of her husband's business; by which it appeared, that he, having a just confidence in his wife's prudence, sometimes delegated the care of the shop to her in his own absence. On the last of these occasions, that business required his taking a journey of some length, he left her absolutely without money to keep

the house; on her remonstrating with him upon it, M. de l'Ormel said, "I do not, indeed, leave you money, but I leave you money's worth; you will never want a supply." And this representative of specie, *c'étoit un nouveau roman, c'étoit Biddulphe.* "*Oui,*" continued Madame de l'Ormel, "*ce sont vos Clarices, vos Biddulphes,* those are the works that bring in the money. I found my husband's words true, and that I sold more copies of Sidney Biddulph than of any other novel upon sale."

Like all popular novels, Sidney Biddulph formed a school. I have seen many works written in the same style, but none that came up to it, either in humour or pathos.

These are all Mrs. Sheridan's published works. In the printed letters of Mrs. Sheridan from France, mention is made of her having begun a tragedy in prose, upon part of the story contained in the two last volumes of Sidney Biddulph; but I can find no traces of such a tragedy.

With her usual elasticity of spirit, rising buoyant from disappointment, Mrs. Sheridan had written a comedy called "A Trip to Bath." This, Dr. Watkins says, was, after the author's death, approved by Garrick, and shewn to Murphy, who, by their joint recommendation, *prevailed* on Dr. Johnson to read it. Without stopping to point out that a piece which had been approved by Garrick, stood in no need whatever of a last appeal to Dr. Johnson, whose authority, in mere theatrical matters, did not possess equal weight, it is a sufficient contradiction to this anecdote to observe, that Mr. Sheridan was not on such terms either with Murphy (who was but slightly known to him), or with Johnson (with whom he was at variance), as to have confided to their perusal a manuscript play of his wife's after his return from France. I rather suspect that the reason this play never made its appearance, was that the author did not live to give the finishing touches to it; and after her death Mr. Sheridan's grief was too deep and sin-

cere to allow him ever to attempt the painful task.

The time approached which was to overcloud at once all his flattering prospects of domestic happiness. Shielded from the numerous vexations that till now had attended him; blest in beholding his children thrive, his wife's health apparently improve, and in the uninterrupted exercise of his mental faculties, the heart of Mr. Sheridan (never insensible to religious impressions) overflowed in gratitude to his Creator; and he expressed in a letter to a friend (in a very different spirit from that which has been attributed to him), his conviction that "It is from religion alone we can hope for contentment in this life, or happiness in a future one." How short was the period that intervened between his making this discovery, and his being called upon for the utmost exercise of religious resignation! In the autumn of 1766 it became necessary, from the state of Mr. Sheridan's affairs, that he should make a visit to Ireland; and it was arranged that Mrs. Sheridan should

remain at Blois with the children, till he had effected some more desirable arrangement. Mrs. Sheridan felt the necessity of this separation, and acquiesced in it with apparent cheerfulness. She laid down a plan for the employment of her time during her husband's absence; and, in the course of study on which she proposed to enter with her eldest daughter, promised herself the best compensation for *his* departure, whose cheering applause was wont to prompt and invigorate her more brilliant efforts. But all these appearances of satisfaction were fallacious. Till now, except in cases of necessity, and for short intervals, Mrs. Sheridan had been, in every vicissitude, the constant companion of her husband; and it is not to be doubted, but that the prospect of a long separation from him, and of being obliged to remain with her children in a foreign land, the language of which she but imperfectly understood, and in which she possessed but few intimate friends, preyed upon her mind, and occasioned a conflict between her inclinations and a sense of what

was right; that, in the end, proved fatal to her health.

Mrs. Sheridan possessed a very mild temper, but at the same time extremely strong feelings; and while the *one* prevented her giving utterance to complaint, the *other* tended to add keenness to every silently endured sorrow.

A few days before Mr. Sheridan's intended departure, Mrs. Sheridan was seized with a fainting fit; and the debility continuing, it became necessary for her to be conveyed to her bed. She had been subject all her life to such seizures, but the unusual duration of this one, added to other alarming symptoms, rendered it necessary to call in a physician. The physician pronounced the attack to be of the nature of low fever, but saw no immediate danger. Still the solicitude of Mr. Sheridan induced him to give up all thoughts of his journey; and the rapidly increasing indisposition of his wife soon absorbed all other considerations, in the most agonizing apprehensions for her safety. From that time her strength rapidly and daily declined, but the

powers of her mind were in no way diminished or impaired.

Next to the awful preparation for death, which her virtues must have prevented her from dreading, however her earthly attachments might have made her wish to avert it, the mind of Mrs. Sheridan chiefly turned upon *that* object, which, whether in health or in sickness, had ever been with her the first consideration: and she gave in her conduct a striking proof of the affection which had been the ruling principle of her life. Fearful that in this time of unavoidable confusion, her husband's comfort might be neglected, she never omitted, during the course of this, her last illness, (which was protracted, in all, to about a fortnight,) to issue daily, from her sick bed, the necessary domestic orders; evincing the same anxiety to procure the articles which he particularly liked, and in every point great or small to study his welfare and comfort, which had made her, in her days of health, as valuable as a directress of his

household, as she was charming in the light of a friend and companion.

The remembrance of such endearing attentions, as forming the suitable termination of a life of undeviating duty and affection, must have greatly increased the bitterness of that inevitable separation which was now so very near at hand. Until the day before her decease, Mrs. Sheridan retained her senses; but when it was evident no hope remained, her children were taken by their sympathising friends, the Montignys, from the house.

As the owner of the house which she occupied was a Roman Catholic, she thought it her duty, at the height of Mrs. Sheridan's danger, to inform the Curé, who, being a weak and bigotted man, would have disturbed the last moments of the dying with the performance of the rites commanded by the Church of Rome. His intention, however, was prevented by the timely precautions of her ever kind and considerate friends.

The eldest Miss Sheridan (Alicia), though conveyed away from the house, had managed to steal back unperceived, under the influence of a feeling which irresistibly impelled her to take a last look at the scene that contained the object of her dearest affections. In the bed-chamber of her dying mother, a singular spectacle awaited her. Colonel Montigny had taken his station in the room, to prevent the last moments of the departing spirit from being disturbed by the injudicious and unauthorized intrusion of a Priest of a different religion, since it was not possible to procure the consolations of one of the Protestant faith. Mrs. Sheridan knew her daughter; and looking affectionately towards her, articulated the words, "*Ma chère fille!*" A remarkable circumstance, as she was not, when in health, in the habit of speaking the French language.

Soon afterwards, she became speechless, but knew every one. The day before her death she was suddenly deprived of her senses, but

did not appear to suffer any pain. She expired* without a groan or struggle, and closed at the age of forty-two years a life, which, as it had been from the moment of her marriage, the brightest pattern of connubial affection, might be considered, in some degree, to have fallen at length a sacrifice to that prevailing principle. To her husband her loss was, to use his own eloquent expression, "The most fatal event that could befall him in this life; what the world could not repair—a bosom friend—another self." His children's loss he justly considered as, if possible, a greater calamity. They were just entering upon that critical period of youth which most demands and requires a mother's care; and no mother was ever more admirably calculated to watch over and direct the pursuits of a young and rising family.

The symptoms of Mrs. Sheridan's malady, until within a day or two of her death, had

* August 1766, not 1767, as erroneously stated in the "General Biographical Dictionary."

been apparently so inadequate to produce a fatal termination, that her afflicted husband was induced to take the necessary steps to ascertain whether some latent derangement of the system had not accelerated her dissolution. The result of this enquiry was, that the whole art of medicine could not have prolonged her days; as all the noble parts were attacked, and any one of four internal maladies must have proved mortal. From this conviction Mr. Sheridan seemed to derive a melancholy consolation.

The same bigotry and prejudice that would (if not prevented) have disturbed the last moments of Mrs. Sheridan with the exhortations of a religion which she disclaimed, operated also against her remains, as a Protestant, being suffered to repose in a Roman Catholic burial-ground; and the affection of Mr. Sheridan gave him an invincible antipathy to consigning to the earth a person so dear to him, in the uncere-monious manner with which Protestants were interred. But here again he met with the support of that friendliness which I have already

had occasion to notice. Another military man, as zealous and as kind as Colonel Montigny, (Colonel de Maupas,) obtained permission from a French Protestant family of consequence in the neighbourhood, to have the remains of Mrs. Sheridan deposited in their own cemetery, about six or seven miles distant from Blois. The procession was at night, and by torch-light, to avoid any opposition on the part of the ignorant populace. It was escorted by a party of Colonel Maupas' dragoons, and attended by Mr. Sheridan and his son, Charles Francis; who afterwards returned and remained at the house of the compassionate Colonel de Maupas, while Colonel Montigny's family took charge of his two daughters.

The humanity and liberality of sentiment evinced by these two foreigners on this occasion, both military men, and one wearing the cross of the military order of St. Louis (therefore Roman Catholics themselves), deserves a particular record; and was only to be equalled by the kindness shown by every individual con-

nected with them, to Mrs. Sheridan's surviving family.

Such were the marks of respect paid to Mrs. Sheridan's memory, in the land which, although a foreign one, had admired her talents, and had witnessed her virtues. She was now removed to that sphere where the incense of human applause could no longer gratify, where the cares of human life could no longer assail her. To that sphere, where alone those faculties which she had always devoted to the worthiest purposes, could attain their complete expansion, and those virtues which had proved the blessing of all connected with her, were at length to receive their full reward.

CHAPTER X.

Addition to the Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan.—Remarks upon a passage in Dr. Watkins.—Mr. Thomas Sheridan and Dr. Johnson.—The late Marquis Townshend.—Garrick.—Changes in the public taste.—Boswell.—Original Anecdote of Lord Auchinleck.—Original Anecdote of Boswell and His late Majesty George the Third.—The Man of Feeling.—Anecdote of Dr. Johnson.

I HAVE now (properly speaking) brought the "Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan" to a close; but in looking over other publications, particularly the "Memoirs of the public and private Life of the Right Honourable R. B. Sheridan," in order to avoid useless repetitions, I have observed so many circumstances relative both to Mr. Thomas Sheridan and his son Richard Brinsley, stated in a manner different from what his family know to be the true one, that this work might have justly been deemed

incomplete without the correction of such misstatements.

A biographer, however honest his intentions, *must* fall into numerous errors, who has not had the advantage of communication with the surviving relatives of those whose lives he undertakes to write, and who can alone furnish him with the means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. Every fact that I am preparing to give, is either from the statement of Mrs. H. Lefanu, the only survivor of Mr. T. Sheridan's once numerous family, sister of R. B. Sheridan, and who was an eye and ear witness of the circumstances, or derived from documents of the most undoubted authenticity; and which will leave not a suspicion upon the correctness of the anecdotes related.

It has been remarked by Dr. Johnson, that "Many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world." In this maxim I think I can perceive the cause of the following mistatement that occurs in Dr. Watkins's Memoirs of R. B. Sheridan,

pages 144 and 145. The elder Mr. Sheridan is there accused, when disappointed in his plan of interesting the government for the scheme of national education, of being "weak enough to exercise his pen and his tongue in abusing the depravity of the people, and the corruption of the state. He did not even spare the throne to which he was so much indebted; and when the dispute with America began to wear a serious aspect, he threatened to carry the blessing of his intellectual refinement across the Atlantic for the illumination of that country."

Now this accusation, coupled as it is with the then peculiar circumstances of the times, and Mr. Thomas Sheridan's peculiar obligations to government, carries with it a very serious aspect indeed, and such a one as every honest mind must be anxious to repel, for the sake of a relation whose memory is dear to them. Such conduct would exhibit an instance of complicated baseness and ingratitude, which would entitle Mr. Sheridan to forfeit the character he never compromised in a single instance

of his life, that of a man of honour; it is necessary, therefore, to sift it to the bottom; and upon such investigationthe foundation of the story is to be found in the following passage of Boswell's Johnson, given in the dramatic form of dialogue, in which that author delighted.

"Upon being told that old Mr. Sheridan indignant at the neglect of his oratorical plans had *threatened* to go to America.

"JOHNSON. I hope he will go to America.

"BOSWELL. The Americans don't want oratory.

"JOHNSON. But we can *want* Sheridan."

The attentive reader will observe, that the biographer of Richard Brinsley Sheridan has in his statement implicitly copied the word "threatened" from Boswell's Johnson.

Boswell was desirous of preserving this trifling play upon the word *want*, as signifying either to *desire*, or to *do without;* and to accomplish that purpose, he did not hesitate to give stability and currency to a false report, injurious alike to the moral character and good

sense of the elder Mr. Sheridan: but how little he is deserving of credit, when treating of any individual except his "illustrious friend," has by this time been sufficiently ascertained.

The fact is, Mr. Sheridan's merit was well known and considered in America.* A plan embracing such extensive and important interests as his, was remarkably calculated to attract the attention of a country of freedom, full of minds distinguished by energy and the spirit of enquiry. Ardent in the cause of education to the last, Mr. Sheridan, a very few years before his death, had planned a series of works on the English language, on a regularly progressive scale; to begin with the simplest elements of English until brought up to his Dictionary, which he considered only as the finishing part of a much more extensive plan. Ill health and various disappointments prevented

* That country to which may be applied the bard's beautiful apostrophe:

"The nations have fallen, and thou still art young;
Thy sun is but rising, when others are set."

the complete execution of this idea; but some of the elementary parts of the work were printed off, and the well-known Granville Sharpe, who was his friend, had engaged to distribute several thousand copies in America; but this proof of a popularity which it is the aim of every author to attain, ought not to be wrested into a conclusion inimical to the character of Mr. Sheridan.

However disappointed Mr. Sheridan might be in the hopes held out to him respecting his plan of education, he was incapable of acting or speaking in the manner attributed to him in the "Memoirs of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan." His late Majesty was never mentioned by him but in terms of gratitude and respect. His pen never was applied to the purpose of abuse. It is true that he occasionally wrote on the subject, he had so much at heart, British education, in some of the public papers. As the transcriber of almost all he wrote of that kind, Mrs. H.

Lefanu is authorized to speak on the subject with certainty. As to a *menace* of going to America, nothing can be more absurd than the assertion. Mr. Sheridan sometimes said that were he many years younger he should like to visit that country.

In the following page (146), the same accusation is repeated with a slight variation of the words.

"The same year and the next (1770), he (Mr. Sheridan) performed several times at that house (Foote's Theatre), on a sharing concern, as he afterwards did one season at Covent Garden, on similar terms; *but the imprudence of his conduct in vilifying the very source from which he drew his principal support gave so much offence, that the London theatres were shut against him by command.*"

The theatres were *not* shut against Mr. Sheridan *by command;* Government had nothing to do with the business. Drury Lane was shut against him, because, although Mr. Garrick

offered him the highest terms as an *articled actor*, he never would consent to the only kind of engagement Mr. Sheridan would make—that of performing upon shares.

The rest of the paragraph is unfortunately not more correct.

"On this he travelled as a lecturer, and visited Dublin, where he received a flattering mark of distinction in having for his pupils the Hon. George Grenville and his brother, who were sent over accompanied by their tutor, the late Dr. William Cleaver, Bishop of St. Asaph, to study elocution under Mr. Sheridan."

As our aim is truth, and not to represent Mr. Thomas Sheridan as either more or less favoured for his merit than he really was, we feel it our duty to disavow this mark of distinction ascribed to him, as readily as we should repel any false statement to his disadvantage. It is *not* fact that the late Marquis of Buckingham and Mr. T. Grenville were sent to Ireland to be placed under his care. It was during Mr. Sheridan's residence at Bath that

the late Marquis of Buckingham came with his tutor Dr. Cleaver from Oxford, and was for some time his pupil.

The following year he came again for the same purpose, and was then accompanied by his brother Mr. T. Grenville, who visited Bath merely for amusement. Mr. T. Grenville was never Mr. Sheridan's pupil. At the close of the summer, both gentlemen, with Dr. Cleaver, went to Ireland on a tour of pleasure. It happened that Mr. Sheridan and his family went at the same time; and this, it is probable, gave rise to the false report of their being sent to Ireland purposely to receive instructions from him.

With respect to the remainder of the assertion in page 146, Mr. Sheridan *never travelled* as a lecturer. We shall examine the propriety of this expression more at large in another place.

The next paragraph I think it necessary to notice is this—

"Soon after the grant of a pension to She-

ridan, Johnson made use of some strong expressions on the occasion, reflecting alike on the minister and the object of his favour, which the latter never forgave; yet, by a very strange inconsistency, he affected to take credit to himself for being the instrument of procuring a similar grant to the Doctor. In this, however, his vanity assumed what is too improbable to be believed: for his influence was never of that magnitude to give him a privilege of recommending men of talents to court favour."—*Memoirs of the Right Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, p.* 152.

Now "improbable" as this appears to the Biographer, the fact is certainly true. Mr. Sheridan did not pretend to the power of recommending persons *immediately* to court favour, but he was the *first* who mentioned the distress and merit of Dr. Johnson to Mr. Wedderburne, afterwards Lord Loughborough, who mentioned it to Lord Bute, by whose influence a pension was conferred on Johnson of three hundred pounds a year. Had the Biographer

consulted Boswell's Johnson with equal diligence on *this*, as on other occasions, he would have found this statement confirmed in the following words.

"When I spoke to Lord Loughborough, wishing to know if he recollected the prime mover in the business, he said, "all his friends assisted;" and when I told him that Mr. Sheridan strenuously asserted his claim to it, his Lordship said, "*Sheridan rang the bell.*"

"*It is but justice to add,*" continues Boswell, "Mr. Sheridan told me, that when he communicated to Dr. Johnson that a pension was to be granted him, he replied in a fervour of gratitude, 'The English language does not afford me terms adequate to my feelings on this occasion: I must have recourse to the French; I am *pénétré* with His Majesty's goodness.' When I repeated this to Dr. Johnson *he did not contradict it.*"

Earlier in the same work, we have Boswell's assurance that "the great fame of his Dictionary had not set Johnson above the necessity of

making provision for the day that was passing over him."

"No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand, to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country."

What no royal or noble patron thought it worth his while to do, Mr. Sheridan laboured to the utmost of his little power to *cause* to be effected.

When his acquaintance with Johnson began, Johnson's health and means of living were both still precarious. The labour of the Dictionary had considerably increased the weakness of one of his eyes, and he was often assailed with dismal forebodings respecting the loss of the other. Under these circumstances, Mr. Sheridan did what few men in any station have been found capable of doing. Possessing the ear of a friend of the ministers, instead of representing his own unprovided situation (it was at this time that, after the destruction of his theatre, he was labouring in London to support a wife

and young family by his honourable exertions), he mentioned the case of a man whose necessities were, in his opinion, greater than his own, and had the satisfaction of being the joyful bearer of the tidings of royal munificence to the distressed object of it.

Such noble conduct was not suffered to go unrewarded; and a few months afterwards a pension, *but of inferior value*, was conferred by the same royal hand upon Mr. Sheridan.

What was Johnson's first emotion upon hearing that the man who had pointed out and recommended *his* merit, was also distinguished by a mark of royal favour—an exclamation the most injurious that was perhaps ever dictated by the spirit of malignity and pride; one that makes us sigh over the weakness of human nature when we find that even a mind such as Johnson's could fall so low—

"What, have they given *him* a pension? then it is time for me to give up *mine!*"*

* It was not thus that Mr. Sheridan's merit was rated by others. When, after the death of his lamented wife, Mr. Sheridan

Those who affirm that Mr. Sheridan, on its being repeated to him ought to have overlooked this insult, because Johnson, after a pause, added,

Sheridan went to Ireland in the autumn of 1766, His Excellency the Marquis of Townshend, then Lord Lieutenant, was pleased to send for him expressly, and to ask why he did not see him oftener at the castle. Mr. Sheridan replied, he would have gone oftener had he supposed his paying his duty there would be acceptable. His Excellency resumed, "Mr. Sheridan, since 1754 we are your debtors; nothing has been done for you in Ireland, where you risked and suffered so much." The Marquis then offered Mr. Sheridan commissions in the army for both his sons, which he, having other views for them, respectfully declined. He, however, put Mr. Sheridan's two daughters upon the *Concordatem*, a provision sufficient to defray the expences of their education while they enjoyed it, which was not above four years; it being then unfortunately lost for want of renewing the customary application. After these steps, the Viceroy turned to Lady Townshend who was present, saying, "I put Mr. Sheridan's interests into your hands; if in the hurry of business I should forget him, be it your province to remind me of them." It was in London that Mr. Sheridan learned the afflicting news of the death of the first excellent Lady Townshend, and judged, too justly, that his hopes of advantage in that quarter were over.

"However, I am glad that Mr. Sheridan has a pension, for he is a very good man," must have very little knowledge of human nature, or make very little allowance for the finest feelings connected with it. Johnson's first exclamation was the spontaneous burst of his real sentiments; and as such must be ever considered as most offensive to a man who was a fellow-labourer in the cause of elegant literature with himself.

"Injuries," says Junius, "may be atoned for and forgiven, but insults admit of no compensation; they degrade the mind in its own esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge."

And what was the extent of Mr. Sheridan's revenge on this occasion? simply avoiding any further opportunities for a repetition of such offensive conduct, by shunning the society of a man who was capable of treating him so unworthily. In a life of Cook, published a few years ago, it is very properly observed:

"The late Mr. Thomas Sheridan's declining any correspondence with Johnson, after the

impudent and illiberal expression respecting his pension, shewed a just, proper, and manly resentment."

Yet this purely *negative* conduct is what is stigmatized by the biographer of R. B. Sheridan as "haughty demeanour and uncivil behaviour," and more pointedly condemned in the following paragraph.

"Dr. Johnson made frequent overtures for a renewal of that intimacy which had formerly subsisted between him and Sheridan, but they were most ungraciously repelled: and, one day when the Doctor was engaged to dine with Mr. Dilly the bookseller, Sheridan who was also invited, left the house immediately upon hearing into whose company he was about to be ushered."

In answer to this I am happy to be able to produce a case in point from Davies's Life of Garrick, in which Garrick's conduct was exactly similar, and no one ever attempted to cast a shadow of blame on him in consequence.

Mr. James Ralph, the political writer, had a most unfortunate mania for the drama, and was continually teasing Garrick to give him encouragement to write for the stage; this, Garrick, having already experienced his incapacity, would not do; but having a real friendship for the irascible author, he prevailed upon the minister, Mr. Pelham, to settle a pension upon him of two hundred pounds per annum. Such conduct, it should be supposed, ought to have insured Ralph's eternal gratitude; but the effect was so much the contrary, that in a subsequent publication, entitled the "Case of Authors by Profession," he attacked his benefactor with the most illiberal abuse, sparing neither his moral nor dramatic character. The only reason for this, that could be surmised, was the Manager's refusing some comedy or farce which Mr. Ralph was anxious should be represented. The consequence was what might naturally have been expected; Mr. Garrick never spoke to him afterwards, and refused to be in any

company where he might have the chance of meeting him. Being invited to dinner by Lord Camden, he accepted the invitation with pleasure, but when he was told that Mr. Ralph was to be one of the guests, Mr. Garrick begged to be excused, *for he declared he would not sit in company with the most ungrateful man in the kingdom.**

* Perhaps the title and matter of Ralph's "Case of Authors by Profession," suggested those of the modern publications, "Calamities of Authors," and essays on "The Literary Character."

It is amusing to observe the mutations of fashion—Mr. Ralph *did* bring one comedy upon the stage of Drury Lane, entitled The Astrologer; and though it was assisted by Garrick's friendly efforts, it met with a total failure. Upon which Davies makes the following observations, which were, no doubt, thought at the time very pertinent.

"The acting of Albumazar, the original from whence his beloved Astrologer was taken, gave him uneasiness which nothing could remove but the ill success of that play. Indeed, we may venture to presage that such will be the fate of these old dramatic pieces, all of which *bear such marks of ancient and forgotten manners and customs*, that they cannot, without being entirely refitted, please the present generation.

"I would

To Mr. Boswell himself, Mr. Sheridan had ever been a constant, hospitable, and steady friend. On occasion of a misunderstanding between that gentleman and his father, Lord Auchinleck, which threatened a total breach between them, Mr. Sheridan had the pleasure of acting as mediator, and effecting a perfect reconciliation. Mr. Boswell has acknowledged his friend's kindness in many parts of his great

"I would be understood always to except the works of Shakespeare, which being founded on that nature which will be eternally the same, and not dependant upon *variable fashion* and *local custom*, must please as long as our language shall last."

Since Tom Davies wrote this criticism, a Genius has arisen, and effected a total revolution in public taste. A modern dramatic piece, entitled The Astrologer, has been received with applause. The historical romance has been revived, adorned with livelier and more unfading colours, and cultivated with distinguished success; and we stand a fair chance of being initiated in a most agreeable and entertaining way,—in the many disused "customs," "ancient and forgotten manners," and "local superstitions of our ancestors." Such total changes in opinion, render books written some time ago the more amusing to an observing mind.

work; but, in others, his constant desire to elevate the character of Johnson above that of all his contemporaries, has betrayed him into very invidious and unfair attacks upon Mr. Sheridan's character.*

James Boswell was a most entertaining Biographer, (he has not formed a school) but in his private conduct he was often deficient in tact, or was possessed of a surprising degree of "modest assurance;" an observation which the following anecdote, communicated from unexceptionable authority, will amply justify.

* It appears that James Boswell could never create in his father and wife an equal relish with his own for Dr. Johnson's society.

Expressing himself to his father in enthusiastic admiration of that great man, he exclaimed, "Oh, Sir! he is in himself a constellation of talents!" "A Constellation!" repeated the honest old lord; "Then by my saul, mon, he maun be the Great Bear!"

"I have seen," said the provoked but much enduring Margaret Boswell, "many a bear led by a man; but you, James, are the first man I ever knew that suffered himself to be led by a bear."

When Boswell was about to publish his "Tour to the Hebrides," having a communication of a political nature to make previous to its seeing the light, he adopted the unceremonious method of *calling* upon the highest personage in the kingdom for the above mentioned purpose. The illustrious personage sent him word he should see him at the levee. Accordingly, Boswell dressed and took his station in the circle. When it came to his turn to be spoken to, he announced to His Majesty the work he intended to publish, and said his motive in doing so was in order to know in what manner he was to *name* a *person* he should have occasion to mention in the course of his narrative.

That to call him the *Pretender* was what he could not think of doing, as it was against his principles; that to name him the Chevalier St. George was awkward, it being a title that did not in reality belong to him; in this dilemma he wished to have His Majesty's commands upon the subject. "Nay," said the King, "call him what you please." "I may say then," resumed

the author, "that I have your Majesty's sanction for styling him 'The unfortunate grandson of James the Second.'"—The King made no reply to the disrespectful and indiscreet pertinacity of Boswell, but immediately passed on to the next person in the circle.

In general, Boswell certainly deserves as little as any writer the imputation of "marring a curious tale in telling it;" yet in one truly "curious" anecdote that he has related, he has, either through ignorance or inattention, omitted a material circumstance that greatly enhanced its interest. It relates to the dispute concerning the real author of "The Man of Feeling." Boswell tells us,—"Some years ago a little novel entitled 'The Man of Feeling,' (what a manner of describing that original and beautiful work!) was assumed by Mr. Eccles, a young clergyman, who was afterwards drowned near Bath. He had been at pains to *transcribe* the whole book, with blottings, interlineations and corrections, that it might be shewn to several people as an original.

" It was in truth the production of Mr. Henry Mackenzie, an attorney, in the Exchequer, at Edinburgh, who is the author of several other ingenious pieces; but the belief with regard to Mr. Eccles became so general that it was thought necessary for Messrs. Strahan and Cadell to publish an advertisement in the newspapers, contradicting the report, and mentioning that they purchased the copyright of Mr. Mackenzie."—*Boswell's Johnson, vol. i. pp.* 343, 344. *Edit. of* 1811.

Here is, indeed, a strange instance of literary forgery, and misdirected literary ambition. The anecdote is true as far as it goes, but Boswell omitted to mention a striking circumstance attending the death of the unfortunate Mr. Eccles. He was drowned in the Avon, in consequence of an attempt to save the life of a child who had fallen into that river. His perishing thus, a victim to an act of humanity, confirmed to his memory at Bath, until his literary fraud was detected, the name which he had obtained during his lifetime, in consequence of

the work falsely attributed to him—that of "The Man of Feeling."

Another story, which Boswell, I think, has spoiled, relates to the death of Dr. Johnson. The words attributed to the doctor were (correctly) as follow.

The day before Johnson died, a friend of his sent a man to assist the person who was already in attendance in sitting up with him. The next day this friend called, and said he hoped that the person he sent had been *vigilant* and *active* in the discharge of his duty. Johnson, with a wonderful gleam of his wonted forcible manner, replied,—"Why, Sir, the fellow had the vigilance of a *dormouse;* and the activity of a *turnspit,* the first time he is put into the wheel!"

Any reader who will take the trouble of consulting the last pages of Boswell, will find that he has unaccountably suffered the spirit of this anecdote to evaporate.

CHAPTER XI.

General Paoli.—Paoli and Napoleon Buonaparte.—Misrepresentation respecting the late Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.—Louisa Bellenden Kerr.—Mr. Sheridan and Rasselas.—Domestic life of the elder Mr. Sheridan.—Mr. Sheridan's theatrical respectability.—The Kildare Street club.—Manager Heaphy.—Anecdote of a beautiful young Actress.—Contradiction of a saying imputed to the elder Mr. Sheridan.—Mrs. Vesey's conversaziones.—Original anecdote of Dr. Johnson.—Tributes to the merit of the elder Mr. Sheridan.—His hopes nearly being realized in Ireland.—Disappointment.—Decease.—Refutation of the statement in the Memoirs of R. B. Sheridan, respecting the funeral of Mr. Sheridan.—Mrs. Siddons.

On Mr. Sheridan's return from France, and settling in London, he took a house in Frith-street, Soho, where he lived in habits of intimacy with Topham Beauclerc, Wedderburne, Frazer, Boswell, the celebrated Foote, and others distinguished in the memoirs of those times for merit, literature, or extraordinary powers of entertaining.

In the year 1769, Mrs. H. Lefanu, then a

child, remembers a thin eager-looking young man, in black, who talked a great deal about General Paoli. Mr. Sheridan said to him, in his good-humoured way, "I suppose you are in mourning for Corsica?" to which he answered in the affirmative. This was James Boswell.

After Corsica had been overpowered by the monarchy of France, the distinguished General Paoli, no longer at the head of his brave countrymen, had with difficulty escaped from his native land, and sought an asylum in England. Here he was welcomed by Boswell, who, in 1765, had received great civilities from him at his palace in Corte. Boswell was now endeavouring to repay these civilities by dancing attendance upon the veteran hero of war, as he had previously done upon the hero of literature. Indeed, James Boswell seems to have had a great deal of the lion-dealer in his disposition. He introduced the General to whatever was remarkable in the way of talent and literature. On being presented to Mr. Sheridan, Paoli addressed

to him this flattering observation: "*Monsieur, on voit dans vos écrits le véritable élève de Swift.*" A discriminating compliment, which shewed not only that the illustrious foreigner had read and admired the works of Mr. Sheridan, but that he was sufficiently master of the English language (though he spoke it with difficulty,) to distinguish the different modes of composition and beauties of style.

Being, as I have already represented, in the habit of entertaining the distinguished characters of the age, Mr. Sheridan promised himself the gratification of giving a dinner to General Paoli. Boswell, delighted with shewing about another "illustrious friend," assured him the General was most desirous of cultivating his acquaintance, and would accept such a civility with pleasure; but such was the universal desire to enjoy the company of this genuine hero, that he found it necessary to decline particular invitations, lest in obliging some he should give offence to others; so Mr. Sheridan missed the

gratification of seeing the patriot at his hospitable board.*

To return to the "Memoirs of the Right Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan." The following paragraph deserves particular notice, as being founded wholly upon misinformation.

"Shortly after his (Richard Brinsley's) final removal from school, he went upon a visit to some friends at Bristol, where his narrow allowance impelled him to have recourse to invention for the supply of his necessities; in consequence of which he departed from that city in silence, and with precipitancy."—*Watkins*, vol. i. p. 167.

From whatever source he derived this story

* Before I dismiss the subject of General Paoli, I may be permitted to mention the anecdote, that, almost thirty years afterwards, at Bath, when the fame of his wonderful countryman, Buonaparte, was the topic of discourse, Paoli observed to Miss Lee, author of "The Canterbury Tales," that he was godfather to two or three of the Buonaparte family; but as none of them bore his name (Pascal), he was not certain whether Napoleon might be one of the number or not; whether or not the defender of his country's liberties had to answer for the sins of the enemy of the liberties of mankind!

of the excursion to Bristol, Dr. Watkins may rest assured it is a complete fabrication. On his leaving Harrow school, Richard Brinsley, with his brother, who was just returned from France, became an inmate of his father's house on the King's Road, Chelsea; from whence they removed in the winter to his house in London, where they resided nearly two years. During this time both the young men were regularly attended by Mr. Kerr, a gentleman who once practised as a physician, but who, upon being obliged by loss of health to quit his profession, supported himself by giving instructions in Latin and the mathematics.* Charles Sheridan, and

* However unwilling unnecessarily to step forward, or to hurt the feelings of individuals labouring, perhaps, under unmerited distress, justice here obliges the author to notice a case that came to her knowledge through the Morning Chronicle of October the 17th, and afterwards, 1823, in which the sufferer threw upon the memory of the late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan the most unmerited reproach. A number of readers must be aware that I allude to the letters of Louisa Bellenden Kerr. There, it is asserted

his brother Richard Brinsley also, attended Mr. Angelo's fencing and riding school; while from

asserted that Mr. Kerr (the father of the letter-writer, and the person mentioned in the text, "while rising to the height of eminence in his profession, had unfortunately contracted *a most intimate friendship* with the celebrated *Brinsley Sheridan*, and was fatally induced, by the fascination of his eloquence and professions of friendship, to intrust in his hands *not only the far greater part of his property*, but the only documents in existence of his birth and family claims; both of which were, in consequence, irretrievably lost." The writer, who, in another place, styles herself "the only surviving descendant of the late Duke of Roxburgh's family, and of Hugh Bellenden Kerr," proceeds to state that her father's "insolvency and total ruin soon followed;" and that, "after being long amused with flattering hopes and delusive promises, and finally denied all admittance to the faithless friend, *for whose service he had sacrificed all his own and his family's hopes and prospects in life*, his mind was overpowered by the acuteness of his feelings, and he sunk into a state of melancholy despondence, which totally incapacitated him from the duties of a profession that was become his only dependence." The "documents and family claims" are afterwards more precisely stated, in a letter intended for the eye of his Majesty, to be "a forfeited estate, now in the occupation of a distant branch of the family in Ireland,

their father they received daily instructions in the study of their own language. These details

and a pension of one hundred and fifty pounds a year on the Irish establishment, for life."

Although subsequent disclosures must have tended, I presume, considerably to shake the credit of the fair writer, yet, if *one* mind was influenced, if one additional calumny against Mr. Sheridan gained force by her assertions, it will not be unuseful to trace that calumny to its spring, and to shew how utterly destitute of a syllable of truth is the whole fabrication. Others may think, and justly, that a dignified silence is the best reply to such ridiculous accusations; but, in a work, in which the relations of the late unfortunate Mr. Kerr with the Sheridan family come naturally under review, such a silence on the author's part would be a cowardly desertion of the task she has imposed on herself; and she is happy to be able, from authority of the most unquestionable correctness, to give a positive and total contradiction to every part of the preceding assertions.

When Mr. Kerr first became known to the elder Mr. Sheridan, which was previous to the year 1764, in which the family went to France, he practised as a physician; but, an unfortunate illness having ended in total derangement of intellect, so as to require confinement, he was of course incapacitated from following his profession.

Thus, the event which Miss Kerr laments, and attributes

to

it is necessary to enter into, on account of the erroneous inference the biographer has deduced from erroneous premises.

to the eloquence and artifices of "the celebrated Brinsley Sheridan," as she is pleased to style him, it will be observed, took place when he was a boy, and innocent of any acquaintance with Mr. Kerr, who was *his father's*, not *his* contemporary. During Mr. Kerr's afflicting misfortune, he incessantly raved of the elder Mr. Sheridan, who, some time after his return from France, in the year 1770, found poor Mr. Kerr apparently reinstated in the possession of his senses, but in very distressed circumstances, in London. This was the period mentioned in the text, when, partly with a view to serve Mr. Kerr, and partly under the impression that his instructions might be of benefit to his sons, Mr. Sheridan engaged him to give them lessons in mathematics. Mr. Kerr also assisted Charles Francis, Mr. Sheridan's eldest son, who had not had the same advantages as his brother, of a learned education in the study of the Latin language. During two years, as abovementioned, this attendance was continued, and on the days of teaching, Mr. Kerr was always invited to dinner, and to pass the evening. About the same time Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan recommended him to Mr. Simon Ewart, a young gentleman he had known in France, and the son of a most respectable merchant in the City. Mr. Ewart became his pupil, and the

" Such acts of youthful indiscretion and levity are not here alluded to in a spirit of malignity,

family treated him with the same hospitality he experienced at Mr. Sheridan's house; and they also procured him pupils. Charles Francis Sheridan and Simon Ewart having more occasion for his assistance than Richard Brinsley, they took more interest in him, and often passed evenings with Mr. Kerr, to pursue their studies, *paying the whole expense of these little parties*, in which his other pupil never joined. This little meeting used to be called, jocosely, the Club; and by this it plainly appears that Richard Brinsley Sheridan was the *least* intimate with Mr. Kerr of any of his pupils. The removal of Mr. Sheridan and his family to Bath, occasioned a cessation of intercourse; but, in 1775, they were again in London; and Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan one day informed his father that he had been called upon by his old master, Mr. Kerr, to be present at his marriage, either as a witness or to give away the bride—the author of this communication does not exactly recollect which. The circumstance at the time excited some pleasantry, as the bride (though designated by Miss Kerr as "in the bloom of life") was, in reality, far from young; and the bridegroom was contemporary with Mr. C. F. Sheridan's father. Mr. C. F. Sheridan also learned that Mr. Kerr had obtained a situation in the College of Physicians, which entitled him to lodging, coals, and a small salary. In 1783, when Mr. C. F. Sheridan

but for the important purpose of elucidating character, and of shewing the baneful and ex-

F. Sheridan held the situation of Secretary at War in Dublin, he was surprised by a visit from Mr. Kerr, who told him he came over to recover a large property to which he was heir, and produced papers, which Mr. C. F. Sheridan, who had been called to the bar, agreed to look over. Upon examination, Mr. C. F. Sheridan (whom Miss Kerr has mistaken throughout for his brother R. B. Sheridan) found that Mr. Kerr had no claim whatever to the property he mentioned, and advised his immediate return to England, at the same time giving him the means of doing what he proposed. Mr. Kerr, however, continued in Dublin, persecuting him with visits, and frequent demands on his purse, whence it is possible that he was sometimes "denied admittance" (as stated by Miss Kerr) to *Charles*, not *Richard Brinsley* Sheridan, the latter having nothing whatever to do with the business. Mr. C. F. Sheridan considered Kerr's whole conduct as the result of a deranged mind, and advised Mrs. Kerr, who either accompanied or followed him to Ireland, to get him away. Want of money was again pleaded as an excuse for delay: upon which Mr. Sheridan made another donation, but did not allow it to be given till they were actually on board ship. That subsequent to these events, and in this state of mental derangement, the unhappy man might have persecuted Richard Brinsley Sheridan

tensive effects of parental imprudence."—Vol. i. p. 167-8.

This erroneous opinion of Mr. Sheridan is expressed more explicitly, p. 169.

"Unfortunately, in his anxiety to perfect them in the graces of speech, he forgot the more substantial requisite of self-controul and a disciplined mind, in the labour of patient investigation, and the exercise of the duties which man owes to himself as well as to society.

"Mr. Sheridan was abundantly competent to the employment of delivering lectures on correct and elegant speaking; but he was very ill adapted to train up young men as instructors in general knowledge."

dan with solicitations is not unlikely; but that he was ever his "friend," or could have deprived him of a fortune, which he never possessed, the above facts sufficiently prove. The sister of Mr. Sheridan, who makes this statement, resided with her brother, at the Castle of Dublin, at the time of Mr. Kerr's visits. She saw him in the year 1785, at her father's house, restored to his former calm state of mind, and living in the same humble and laborious situation as when she had first known him.

This passage, it must be confessed, does not show much "general knowledge" of the character of the elder Mr. Sheridan, who was distinguished for the extent of his information on a variety of subjects, and for a taste and a capacity to enjoy the varied treasures of the natural and intellectual world. The following passage is, if possible, still more unfounded.

"Like the moralist in Rasselas, who could prelect with the most convincing force upon the necessity and advantage of governing the passions, *his private deportment would have refuted his principles, or shewn the inefficacy of his rules.*"—Vol. i. p. 169.

Now, if it is inferred that Dr. Johnson meant his friend Mr. Sheridan, by the moralist in Rasselas, that is an error; for their acquaintance did not commence till after Rasselas was written.* If the Biographer merely would

* Though Dr. Johnson could not possibly have had his friend in view in the Philosopher of Cairo, the description of his elocution is not unlike that which time has left us of the elder Mr. Sheridan's.

"As

insinuate that Mr. Sheridan's private conduct contradicted the principles he was desirous of instilling into his children, it is an assertion equally unfounded, as he ever preserved the character of a man of the most unsullied morals, in a profession the most peculiarly exposed to temptation.

Besides those studies and employments to which Mr. Sheridan devoted his sons, during the two years that elapsed between Richard Brinsley's removal from Harrow, and residing at Bath (two years, which the biographer has, I know not why, chosen to slide into *one*), it was his custom every day to assemble his little family to morning prayers, and on Sunday

"As he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building, which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter. He followed the stream of people, and found it a hall or school of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage, raised above the rest, who discoursed with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, *his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant.*"—Rasselas, chap. 18.

evenings he either explained to them the subject of the morning's sermon, or selected for elucidation some portion of scripture calculated to enforce "the duties which man owes to himself as well as to society."

After this, a selection from the works of some religious or moral author was read aloud. Sometimes it was the Ramblers of Dr. Johnson; a choice which reflects equal honour on Mr. Sheridan's candour and his taste. When, as was his custom on these occasions, Mr. Sheridan himself took the book in turn to read, his daughters, though sometimes anxious and fatigued before, owing to the extreme difficulty of completely satisfying an ear so exquisitely correct as their father's, felt instant renovation of spirits and attention; so gratifying to the ear and the mind was his animated and perspicuous manner of delivery.

A better picture cannot be imagined of the sacrifice of private resentment to feelings of morality and principle, than that of Sheridan, bestowing the aid of his elegant and forcible

delivery to set off the pure morality that flowed from the harmonious periods of Johnson!—It surely ought to exonerate him from Dr. Watkins's repeated charges of "spleen," of bearing "a grudge," &c. &c. "to his ancient friend."

Long after his initiation into the gay and busy world, Richard Brinsley Sheridan retained in his vivid imagination a lively recollection of those calm and virtuous hours spent under his father's roof. Once after his marriage, upon occasion of his calling on the elder Mr. Sheridan, on business, his father happened to be absent, but his sister received him in the dining-room where the cloth was laid. "Ah!" said he, "I could fancy myself back among old times, seated with Charles and my sisters at this table, and my father looking round upon us, and giving his favorite toast—"Healths, hearts and homes!"

On the subject of Mr. Sheridan's two sons (pages 170 and 171), it is asserted by Dr. Watkins,

"The eldest son, who had long enjoyed the confidence of his father, and the benefit of his

instructions, was *much employed* by him *in public recitation.*" * * *

"When the youngest was taken from Harrow, he also received lessons in elocution *with the same view.*"

This is a mis-statement; Charles Francis Sheridan never recited in public but once, and that was when he was a boy. His father took him with him when he gave his first course of lectures in the city soon after his misfortunes in Ireland: Richard *never* was brought forward in that way.

"Mr. Sheridan," continues the biographer, "had a house in Bath, where he read lectures to subscribers, and gave private lessons on reading and declamation to a select number of pupils, *in which he was assisted chiefly by Charles, and occasionally by his other son.*"—Vol. i. p. 170.

The foregoing part of this paragraph is correct, but not so the latter. In 1771, Mr. Sheridan removed with his family to Bath, where he gave a course of lectures, but he had no academy. The next circumstance to be noticed in the "Memoirs of R. B. Sheridan" is the ap-

plication to his father of the terms "an itinerant lecturer and actor," pages 193 and 194.

Nothing can give a more unfounded idea of his character. It is strange to apply the derogatory term "itinerant" to the circumstance of Mr. Sheridan's delivering his lectures at the proper seats of learning—at Oxford, where his "Art of Reading" was much studied and esteemed, and where he was complimented with a degree; at Cambridge, where he received the same honour; and in Edinburgh, where, as has been already related, he was presented with the Freedom of the City.

Considering Mr. Sheridan in the light of a theatrical performer, the term is equally inapplicable. It has been, and still continues the custom, for the most distinguished dramatic performers to exhibit their talents in country towns: but Garrick never did so, neither did his not unworthy rival, Sheridan. London and Dublin were the only places that witnessed the performances of Mr. Sheridan. The sole exceptions that occurred from this rule were such

as not to militate in the smallest degree against the respectability of his character.

The first was when he visited Cork, in 1773. At this time he was treated with the most distinguished attention by the most leading persons in the county, who were his valued and intimate friends: the late St. John Jefferies, Esq., of Blarney Castle, and Governor of Cork, and Lord Muskerry, who was High Sheriff of the county. A number of gentlemen of Cork, who had been educated at Trinity College, and had formed themselves into an association, to meet and dine once a week together, immediately upon learning that Mr. Sheridan (who was also of Trinity) was in the neighbourhood, requested him to become a member of their club. Those who reflect upon the little prejudices entertained by the aristocracy of the provinces far more than of the capital, against common theatrical performers, will at once perceive, by this distinguished compliment, that Mr. Sheridan was held in quite a different light.*

* The last time the elder Mr. Sheridan visited Ireland

In a delightful tour to the Lakes of Killarney, which Mr. Sheridan, from his high relish and taste for the beauties of natural scenery, enjoyed with peculiar satisfaction, he (with his two daughters) was received with every token of respect and attention, and with the same distinguished kindness as at Cork; a town, whose inhabitants are remarkable for urbanity to strangers, and for the intellectual cultivation they successfully mingle with the pursuits of business. Returning from his tour to Killarney, Mr. Sheridan was for some time the guest of the Rev.

(1787), he was elected almost unanimously a member of the Kildare Street Club; a society of the highest description in Dublin, of which his son Charles Francis Sheridan, then Secretary at War, was one of the earliest members. Mr. Sterling, a particular friend of old Mr. Sheridan's, announced to him, that he had been elected a member "without a single dissentient voice." Another person present happened unluckily to observe, that there was *one* black bean. "Pooh!" resumed the worthy Sterling, "*That* slipped in by accident!" These two anecdotes will prove that Mr. Sheridan's pursuits never prevented him from being, what Dr. Johnson termed, (coining a word, as he had an undoubted right to do,) "a very *clubable* man."

Dr. James Stopford and Dr. Joseph Stopford, of Charleville, both of the family of the Earl of Courtown; a family no less estimable for purity of conduct than for nobility of blood. From thence he proceeded to Mr. Munsel, of Tervoe; and, during the course of this last visit, was occasionally the guest of Sir Harry Harstonge, the Dean of Limerick, and the principal gentry in the neighbourhood.

His playing at Limerick at all, originated in an anecdote which, although it may excite a smile at Mr. Sheridan's easy good-nature, will find a ready apology in every mind that resembles his. When Heaphy, the manager of the Cork Theatre, who had also the direction of that at Limerick, first engaged Mr. Sheridan to play a certain number of nights at Cork, he made no mention of playing at Limerick; well knowing that it was against Mr. Sheridan's general rule to perform in country theatres. When, however, they met at Cork, the country Manager, for the first time, expressed his expec-

tation* that Mr. Sheridan would also perform during the assize week at Limerick. He protested, with true Irish pathos, if it were known at Limerick that he had Sheridan at Cork, and not at their city, "he would be ruined and undone entirely; let alone having the house pulled about his ears:" and this Mr. Sheridan knew, from bitter experience, might be no idle flourish of rhetoric. He certainly might have refused Heaphy's additional demand, as there was some want of ingenuousness in the conduct of the Irish *manager;* but *his* was not a mind to weigh so minutely the errors of a generally worthy man. He yielded to poor Heaphy's eloquence, and consented to perform a few nights also at Limerick, where his exertions were received with that enthusiasm by which, in his native country, they were always rewarded.

Mr. Sheridan's second visit to Cork was in

* For the full force of the comprehensive Irish—"I expect," see Miss Edgeworth's *truly* "Popular" Tales.

the summer of 1776. He left Dublin with his family, and travelled down to Cork in the company of St. John Jefferies, Esq., whose guest he was, as were also his daughters; and while at Blarney Castle, he was entertained in turn by other families of distinction. These two are the only times that Mr. Sheridan ever played in the country. He never performed any where as an articled actor: and when the candid reader recapitulates the circumstances here related—when he considers the estimation in which Mr. Sheridan was held, and the circle in which he moved—a circle composed of the enlightened, the reverend, and the honourable—of all that was distinguished for rank, or respectable in character—when he compares this with the treatment of common country performers, he will see whether Mr. Sheridan deserves to be classed by Dr. Watkins with *those*, or to rank as a man of talents, and a gentleman.

A curious instance of the value which was set upon Mr. Sheridan's instructions in theatrical

declamation, occurred the following winter, the last that he ever played in Ireland.

A young and very lovely actress, whose beauty and virtue afterwards raised her to a high marriage, took it into her head to pass for a pupil of Mr. Sheridan's, without there being any grounds for such an assertion. She thought that it would benefit her in her theatrical character; and accordingly, when rehearsal was over, or when visitors were present, she used to take out her watch, gravely apologize for hurrying away, but say, "This was the hour that she was to receive the instructions of Mr. Sheridan, and she would not on any account disappoint him." By this ingenious contrivance, she actually convinced several persons that she had the benefit of regular lessons from him in her art; although there was no further foundation for the supposition, than that Mr. Sheridan had once, at rehearsal, suggested an alteration in her manner of repeating one or two speeches.

The biographer of R. B. Sheridan seems, in

several places, deeply impressed with the notion that Mr. Sheridan never consulted the inclinations or genius of his children; but was desirous at all events, that they should devote themselves to public education.

"He (Mr. Sheridan) has been heard *frequently* to say, 'that he would rather see his two sons at the head of respectable academies, as a situation the most beneficial to mankind, than one of them Prime Minister of Britain, and the other at the head of affairs in Ireland.'" —Memoirs of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan, vol. i. p. 168.

Now the only authority for this saying of Mr. Sheridan's, is to be found in "Whyte's Miscellanies;" where we have also seen it, and where in a note it is added—that it was "*very remarkable*" this declaration was made in the year 1782, when Richard Brinsley Sheridan enjoyed the post of Under Secretary of State in England, and Charles, that of Secretary at War in the Castle of Dublin.

Very remarkable would these additional circum-

stances have rendered Mr. Sheridan's opinion, if it had been true that he had in reality thus expressed himself. But unfortunately there is not the slightest shadow of foundation for the story.

In the year 1782, Mr. Sheridan was on no terms with the elder Mr. Whyte, who is mentioned in the "Miscellanies" as the person to whom he made this observation; so it is hardly to be supposed he would choose him as the confidante of his views and wishes with regard to his children. But the real fact is, that so far from feeling the stupid indifference to their advancement ascribed to him by the biographer, Mr. Sheridan received from their success in life the highest gratification of which a paternal heart is susceptible. On the occasion of his favourite son, Charles, being made Secretary at War in Ireland, he gave a dinner at the London Tavern, to which he invited all the friends who shared in the pleasure he experienced from this fulfilment of one of his fondest wishes; and the circumstances of their joyous

meeting have been related to the author by a surviving friend who was present.

We shall only notice one or two more inaccuracies in the "Memoirs," before we advert with regret to the last and most glaring mis-statement, relative to the elder Mr. Sheridan's death.

In page 152, it is asserted that

"Some of the booksellers having undertaken a new edition of the Works of Swift, in nineteen volumes, engaged Mr. Sheridan *to correct the press*, and write a new Life of the Author."

The idea of a new edition, and Life of Swift, originated with Mr. Sheridan himself. He *never* corrected the press. Both as the successful disciple of Swift, and from the habits of intimacy in which his father the Doctor had lived with him, Mr. Sheridan was peculiarly qualified to be the editor of the works of that classical genius, and to rescue his memory from the various aspersions of other biographers.

I shall now briefly mention the occupations of the few last years of his life. In 1785, Mr. Sheridan made a tour of pleasure, by which his

health was much benefited, with Agmondesham Vesey and his lady, who is well known in the fashionable and literary world, and whose name has become familiar to the public by means of the correspondence of Miss Carter, Miss Talbot, and other distinguished literary characters. The tour finished at Tunbridge, where Mr. Sheridan was, during his stay there, successively the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Vesey, and Lord and Lady Cremorne. The ensuing winter in London, the venerable Mrs. Vesey renewed her civilities to Mr. Sheridan, and paid his youngest daughter, Elizabeth, now Mrs. H. Lefanu, who had then come from Ireland to reside with him, the distinguished attention of a visit, though she never in general left her own house. At her evening parties (or *soirées*, as they would now be called), to which Mr. and Miss Sheridan had a general invitation, the guests were sure to meet, on the most pleasant and easy footing, all the names of the time most distinguished for rank and literature.

At Agmondesham Vesey's one evening, Mr.

Sheridan was a witness to one of those unaccountable bursts of spleen in Dr. Johnson, which sometimes reduced that highly-gifted man to the common level of humanity. It was the Doctor's first appearance among them after a pretty long indisposition. Mrs. H———, a relation and friend of Mrs. Vesey's, and a woman of the most kind and benevolent manners, advanced, delighted to see him, and with a countenance expressive of cordial satisfaction welcomed him with, "How do you do, Dr. Johnson? I am extremely glad to see you here again." Whether Johnson thought this an officious familiarity, or did not like his sickness to be noticed, Mrs. H——— had the mortification to receive from the Doctor this rough and unexpected reply: "No, Ma'am! you are *not* glad to see me; nor I am *not* glad to see you; nor I don't care *that* for you!"

In another visit to Tunbridge, in 1786, Mr. Sheridan was gratified by a flattering proof of the efficacy of his system.

The Rev. Mr. Foster, who served the chapel

there, sought his acquaintance, solely on the ground of his literary obligations to him; as he declared that any merit he might possess in the performance of the divine service, he owed to a sedulous attention to the precepts promulgated in Mr. Sheridan's works.

About this time, Mr. Sheridan entertained some idea of making himself more extensively useful in this way, by preparing young clergymen, between the interval of College and ordination, for the proper and forcible delivery of the service of the Church of England. He meant wholly to have confined himself to giving them instructions in the art of reading, and a graceful delivery, in the English language. Having now retired from public life ten years, he was much encouraged to devote his thoughts to private tuition, by the numerous applications he received this year from persons of the first distinction in the state and army, who were anxious to place their sons under his care. But a more brilliant prospect, in Mr. Sheridan's opinion, at this time opened to him.

Understanding from his son Charles, then Secretary at War in Ireland, that Mr. Orde, Secretary to His Grace the Duke of Rutland, was desirous of improving the system of education in that kingdom, he visited Ireland at the earnest request of his eldest son, in the year 1787, to try to form his long-planned National Establishment, under the auspices of a government so friendly to it. For this purpose, Mr. Sheridan had several interviews with Mr. Orde, to make the necessary arrangements.

The funds for carrying this truly national and patriotic scheme into execution were to have arisen from the putting down such free schools as were given by favour, and in which, by the gradual abuses which had gained ground in the lapse of time, no duty was done. These funds were to be appropriated to defraying the expences of the projected national institution. The scite of it was to be at New Geneva, near Waterford; for such was the name that had been given to some buildings erected there in the year 1783, in the expectation that some of the

expatriated Genevese would have settled in Ireland. Mr. Sheridan was now truly happy at what appeared so near a prospect of the great object of his life being accomplished. The unforeseen and deeply lamented death of the Duke of Rutland, and the consequent removal of Mr. Orde, put a final end to these hopes, at the moment there was the most rational prospect of their being realized.

This unexpected overthrow, combined with other vexations, affected Mr. Sheridan's health so much, that a trial of the air of Lisbon was recommended to him. Although very little able to undertake the journey, the idea of a removal to a totally different scene exhilarated his spirits, and the anticipation of amusement to be derived from a variety of new objects, imparted to his mind a momentary energy, which gave a fallacious promise of prolonged existence.

In the summer of 1788, Mr. Sheridan and his youngest daughter left Dublin. The party with whom they passed over to England was

particularly pleasant; consisting of the celebrated Mrs. Crewe and her amiable sister-in-law, Mrs. Lane; and an accidental meeting with another highly distinguished character rendered this little voyage still more agreeable to them.

On stepping into the boat which was to convey him to the vessel, Mr. Sheridan was courteously accosted by a gentleman among the passengers, who, being more commodiously situated, and observing in Mr. Sheridan the indications of age and suffering, politely proposed an exchange of seats.

He immediately entered into conversation with the obliging stranger, and from the first few observations he uttered, perceived he possessed a mind that ranked above the common order. To Mr. Sheridan, who had the highest relish and value for the talents of conversation, and an uncommon power of distinguishing and eliciting them in others, this was a delightful discovery: and the two gentlemen found so many topics in common, and discussed them in a manner so agreeable, that insensibly they col-

lected a little auditory around them, attracted by the intellectual pleasure which the collision of two accomplished minds so unexpectedly afforded them. This highly-gifted man, of whom it might be said, as Johnson observed of Burke, that a person could not stand under a gateway for shelter from a shower in his company, without hearing him utter something worth recording, was John Philpot Curran.*

On shipboard the civilities of Mr. Curran continued; and every attention in his power was paid by him to Mr. Sheridan and his daughter. These civilities did not cease till they landed at Park Gate, where Mr. Curran's humanity and consideration evinced itself in a friendly offer to relieve Mr. Sheridan from the trouble attending on the examination of his baggage at the Custom-House, by transacting that business at the same time with his own.

The proposal was gratefully accepted, and this was the last that Mr. Sheridan and his daughter saw of their pleasant *compagnon de*

* Afterwards Master of the Rolls in Ireland.

voyage, but the transient glow of spirits produced by these circumstances subsided by the time Mr. Sheridan had arrived at Chester. His kind friends expressed their anxiety that he should remain in that neighbourhood till he had recovered from the fatigues of his journey. Mrs. Lane obligingly offered him her house that he might remove from the disturbance of an inn: Mrs. Crewe also joined in requesting him to pass some days at Crewe Hall; but his anxiety to reach the place of his destination urged him to decline all these offers. Though in a state of health so precarious, he proceeded immediately on his journey, and arrived in London, accompanied *only* by his youngest daughter,* and *not* "accompanied by his friend Mr. Whyte," as erroneously stated in the Memoirs of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan, p. 154.

The only foundation for that assertion is, that Mr. Whyte was travelling in England about the same time, with his daughter. A

* Mrs. H. Lefanu.

coolness of many years had prevailed between Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Whyte. During his last visit to Ireland, Mr. Sheridan's youngest daughter had prevailed on him to be so far reconciled to Mr. Whyte, that a slight intercourse of mere civility passed between them. Some days after their arrival in London, Mr. Whyte came to that place with his daughter, who had lived in habits of intimacy with Miss Sheridan; at her intercession, Mr. Sheridan consented to see Mr. Whyte, and it was indeed their "last" interview.*

* In the "Memoirs of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan," p. 138, in the account of the elder Mr. Sheridan's settlement with his creditors after his return from France, not being in the manner approved of by Mr. Whyte, the expression occurs,

"Considering the particular obligations of Mr. Sheridan to his friend."—

Now the loan of a hundred pounds, punctually repaid, which Mr. Sheridan applied for soon after the loss of his wife, was the *only obligation* ever incurred. That he should have asked this small favour from the man *who owed every thing to him*, was very natural, the more so, as at the time he thought well of him. Whatever coolness took place at that

After stating that Mr. Sheridan breathed his last the 14th of August, at his lodgings in Margate, Dr. Watkins adds:

"His remains were interred on the following week, without being attended by any of his nearest relatives."—P. 155.

To this his family beg leave to oppose the following true statement of the facts.

During the short stay of Mr. Sheridan and his daughter in town, Mr. R. B. Sheridan was also in London, detained by business, and visited his father and sister daily. He was very desirous they should go down to Deepden, a house in Surrey, lent to him by his Grace the late Duke of Norfolk; but the elder Mr. Sheridan was anxious to go on to Margate, at which place he proposed to rest previous to his in-

that time was got over, as it was after that period Mr. Sheridan made over his right of publishing his "Art of Reading," in Ireland, to Mr. Whyte, without expecting any return.

The second coolness arose on Mr. Sheridan's part from a stronger cause, and was never removed beyond the slight reconciliation mentioned in the text.

tended voyage. After his arrival at Margate his health declined rapidly, and, being shortly followed thither by his kinsman, the late Dr. Morris, that affectionate friend and relation immediately perceived all hope was over, and wrote in consequence to Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Mr. Sheridan, upon receiving this summons, immediately set off for Margate, and by travelling all night, arrived in time for his father to be sensible of his attentions.

He never left him till he breathed his last, which was nearly two days after the arrival of Mr. Sheridan. Having conducted his sister,* who had never quitted her father, to Deepden, the Duke of Norfolk's seat, where Mrs. Sheridan was then residing, Mr. Sheridan, without resting a single night, returned to Margate, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Richard Tickell, Esq. and Joseph Richardson, Esq., to make the necessary arrangements respecting the funeral.

It had been Mr. Sheridan's intention to have

* Mrs. H. Lefanu.

his father's remains conveyed to be buried near those of Dr. Robert Sumner, of Harrow, his dearest and most esteemed friend; but, on opening the will, he found that the late Mr. Sheridan had left the most positive injunctions that in whatever place he died, he should be buried there, and in the most private manner possible. According to these directions, Mr. Sheridan, as chief mourner, attended the corpse of his father to the village of St. Peter, where his remains were deposited, in a vault in the centre aisle of St. Peter's church. The funeral was also attended by the only other relations he had then in England, the late Dr. Morris and his son,* Richard Tickell, Joseph Richardson, and the faithful attached servant who had brought down the will, and who, with the worthy Dr. Morris and his son, had remained at Margate during Mr. Sheridan's short absence at Deepden in Surrey. Every mark of respect consistent with the directions in the will, was shown by Mr. Sheridan on the occasion; and

* Charles Morris, Esq., now of Southampton.

if others have been attended with more ostentation to the grave, few have been with greater sincerity lamented.

To those who are only acquainted with the character of the elder Mr. Sheridan through the distorted medium of partial and incorrect biographers,—those who imagine him a splenetic projector, always justly disappointed in his schemes, and then railing loudly against the inflictors of his disappointments,—to such he must appear quite a new character, in the more faithful portrait drawn of him by the memory of his only surviving daughter.

In fact, though persecuted through life by fortune, and severely tried by adversity, few among his contemporaries were more esteemed than Mr. Sheridan; and I may add, that in consequence of an equally happy disposition of mind and body, few, during the intervals of affliction, enjoyed with a greater relish the pleasures that his life afforded. Unlike his great compeer Johnson, the imperfection of whose senses obliged him, like the blind, to seek

for pleasure almost exclusively in conversation, Mr. Sheridan, though well qualified to shine there, possessed a knowledge, and excised a fine taste in all the arts, as well as a keen relish for the beauties of nature. Johnson thought Fleet Street finer than Greenwich Park, and the elms near Bolt Court the *ne plus ultra* of rural elegance. Sheridan had a love for rural "sights and sounds," and a judgment in natural scenery, perhaps unparalleled in one whose professional habits obliged him to mingle so much in active life. Possessing all his senses in the keenest perfection, his eagle eye discerned every object of the landscape at the remotest distance; and his taste for the beauties of painting was in proportion to his admiration of nature's models. Without any of the cant of criticism, Mr. Sheridan possessed every requisite for a judge in the art; nor was the pleasure with which he contemplated a fine prospect greater than that with which he stood in admiring contemplation of any of the masterpieces of human genius. Johnson was utterly

insensible to the powers of music. Once, and but once, his Biographer records, he was somewhat affected by musical sounds; they struck him as solemn and affecting, but then he confessed it was at a funeral. Sheridan possessed both judgment and taste in music; indeed, such might be supposed from the exquisite delicacy of his ear, and his unrivalled skill in declamation. To hear him repeat Dryden's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, has been designated by one of the greatest judges now living as a master-piece of recitation. He gave to that divine ode, justly the pride of English lyric numbers, all that force, variety and fire, with which the mind of the venerable Dryden must have glowed, when he pronounced (not with the self-sufficiency of vanity, but with the dignified confidence of merit,) "that it was the best ode which had ever yet been written, or which ever would be composed."*

* "Mr. Malone has preserved a tradition, that the father of Lord Chief Justice Marlay, then a Templar, and frequenter of Wills' coffee-house, took an opportunity to pay his court

to

In his youth Mr. Sheridan had been attached to conviviality and the sports of the field; but these tastes diminished from the time he married, and the loss of the faithful partner who had been indeed to him "a second self," cast a gloom at intervals over the latter part of his life. Many more particulars relating to Mrs. Sheridan might have been collected, but that the mention of her name caused with it recollections so painful to her husband, that his children, from a sense of duty, abstained from recalling, by imprudent questions, the memory of his irreparable loss.

In his notions of female education Mr. Sheridan was extremely liberal. In France he had

to Dryden on the publication of 'Alexander's Feast;' and happening to sit next him, congratulated him on having produced the finest and noblest ode that had ever been written in any language. 'You are right, young gentleman (replied Dryden), a nobler ode never *was* produced, nor ever *will*.' This singularly strong expression cannot be placed to the score of vanity; it was an inward consciousness of merit, which burst forth probably almost involuntarily, and I fear must be admitted as prophetic."—*Scott's Life of Dryden*, pp. 411, 412.

begun to teach his eldest daughter Latin, in the class with her brothers; had not various circumstances occurred to present obstacles to his designs, he would have continued the same instructions to both his daughters. His perfect judgment in all the requisites of his profession, even envy itself has never been able to deny; that this judgment was equalled by his candour, the following little history will testify.

In 1775, the last year of Garrick's management of Drury Lane, Mr. Sheridan was present at Mrs. Cowley's comedy of "The Runaway," in which a sentimental part was sustained by a young lady, whose talents were highly extolled by those who had the best opportunities of judging of her. Notwithstanding this, the comedy was so insipid, and the part she performed so little adapted to the display of superior powers, that it was difficult to discover merit shrouded under so unfavourable a disguise, and the highly-praised young actress made very little impression on him. It was still confidently asserted, that she needed only to be brought forward in parts

equal to her genius, to shine forth a theatrical star of the first magnitude; and her friends lamented the selfish policy of Garrick, who avoided bringing her forward, from a fear that she would divide the public attention with him. As his jealousy even of female performers was well known, the truth of this assertion was never doubted; and one anecdote in particular was circulated, that on occasion of a dispute with Miss Younge, who had begun, as well as other actresses, to shew a refractory temper, he had said, "I tell you, you had better not give yourselves airs, for *there is a woman in the house*, who, if I chose to bring her forward, would eclipse you all in youth, beauty and talent."

These mysterious expressions were considered by Yates, Younge, and Abington, the three reigning female favourites, as merely an empty boast; but much mirth was excited by the idea of Garrick's "Greenroom Goddess," for such was the name she obtained in consequence of the praises he had bestowed on her. Her attraction, however, was not sufficient to enable

her to obtain a renewed engagement at the end of the season. A few years after, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq. had succeeded to the direction of the theatre, the elder Mr. Sheridan, while at Bath for his health, was strongly solicited to go to the play, to witness the performance of a young actress, who was said to distance all competition in tragedy. Though in general he had a dislike to provincial exhibitions, Mr. Sheridan was induced, by the warm commendations bestowed upon this young performer, to depart from his usual practice, and go to the theatre to see her. He found to his astonishment, that it was the lady who had made so little impression on him some years before in the "Runaway;" but who, as Garrick had secretly declared, was possessed of tragic powers sufficient to delight and electrify an audience. There prevailed at that time, and long afterwards, a very disagreeable clause in the articles of the Bath company, by which they were obliged to perform also at Bristol; and in consequence, by some mistake in their frequent

and hurried journeys, the stage clothes of this admired actress were not arrived on the night Mr. Sheridan saw her, and she was obliged to perform in one of the dresses she usually wore in private life. But no disadvantage of dress could conceal her transcendant merit from an eye so penetrating as that of Mr. Sheridan; and after the play was over he went behind the scenes, to get introduced to her, in order to compliment her in the highest terms upon her performance. Such a distinction, from a judge of his acknowledged merit, could not fail of being highly flattering. Mr. Sheridan said, "I am surprised, madam, that with such talents you should confine yourself to the country; talents that would be sure of commanding, in London, fame and success."

The actress modestly replied, that she had already tried London, but without the success which had been anticipated; and that she was advised by her friends to be content with the fame and profit she obtained at Bath, particu-

larly as her *voice* was deemed unequal to the extent of a London theatre.

Mr. Sheridan, who judged very differently of this actress's powers from what her modesty induced her to do herself, spoke, immediately on his return to London, to Mr. King, the acting manager of Drury Lane, strenuously recommending to him, if he had any regard to the interests of the theatre, to engage a performer of abilities so distinguished.

His zeal for the success of his *protégée* did not stop here, but, upon her being engaged, he directed her, with a truly kind solicitude, in the choice of a part for her first appearance. With the usual preference of young and handsome actresses for a character of pomp and show, she inclined to that of Euphrasia, in the "Grecian Daughter;" but the juster taste of Mr. Sheridan determined her in favour of the far more natural and affecting character of "Isabella;" and the judgment with which the selection was made was amply confirmed by the bursts of rapturous ad-

miration which hailed, after the long obscurity to which the jealousy of contemporary talent had condemned her exertions, the full blaze of transcendant merit in MRS. SIDDONS! The kindness of Mr. Sheridan, which did not stop here, but shewed itself in every possible way in her behalf, was gratefully acknowledged by the object of it; who, when at the height of her professional prosperity, was wont to term him "The father of my fortune and my fame!"

The kindness and humanity of Mr. Sheridan's disposition were great; and in his professional career he was often tempted to exert those qualities in a degree that, by the mere worldling, might be deemed imprudent. On some one's remonstrating with him, while he had the management of the Dublin Theatre, upon keeping a superannuated actor on the establishment, to whom he paid a weekly salary, when totally precluded from further exertion, Mr. Sheridan, with benevolent simplicity, replied, "The poor man must live!"* "Yes," objected his friend,

* This answer of Mr. Sheridan irresistibly brings to mind the

" but why should it be at your expense?" Let those who feel inclined to term such conduct folly, examine their own hearts, and dread to discover selfishness lurking under the form of prudence there.

His power of exciting attachment among his inferiors and dependents was very great. The fidelity and devotion of the faithful servant who attended his remains to the grave at Margate, was, through life, and after death, something extraordinary. William Thompson (that was the name of the worthy man) had been in his service twelve years; and after Mr. Sheridan's death, he visited annually the scene where his beloved master's remains were deposited. One of Mr. Sheridan's surviving daughters, who was ignorant of the cause of his absence, inquired it of his wife who re-

the *opposite* sentiment expressed by a great French statesman, on refusing a small petition, " *Mais enfin, Monseigneur,*" observed the starving applicant; " *il faut que je vive.*" —" *Mais, Monsieur ;*" replied His Eminence, " *Je n'en vois pas la nécessité !*"

plied, " Indeed, Ma'am, he goes there every year to weep over his old master's grave!"

Mr. Sheridan's pursuits through life were undertaken with a desire of benefiting mankind, and particularly the then rising generation. When first Mrs. Barbauld's excellent lessons for children came out, his daughter brought them to him as being evidently suggested by an idea thrown out in his " Art of Reading." It was the following passage in which he points out the best manner of instructing children in a clear and natural manner of reading, and of obviating the danger of their falling into either of the extremes of monotone or improper emphasis: —

" The way to prevent this is, to put no book into their hands, which is not suited to their slender capacities; and to take care that they never read any thing, the meaning of which they do not fully comprehend. The best way indeed, of furnishing them with lessons for a long time, *would be to take down their common prattle*, and make them read it, just as they speak it; only

correcting any bad habits they may have acquired in their utterance."—*Art of Reading, Part I.*

When Mr. Sheridan saw the Art of Reading, which had before been a torment to children, made delightful by these admirable "Lessons," he acknowledged the adoption of his scheme, and was much pleased with the execution of it. Every thing that bore a reference to education, whether French or English, had an interest for him. When Madame Genlis's works came out, he read them with avidity, particularly her "*Adèle et Théodore.*" Still reverting to the feeling that was uppermost in his mind, the history of Lagaraye was what struck him most in that work; and the benevolent old man regretted to his daughter that he was not equally favoured by fortune, solely on the ground that it prevented him from being so extensively useful.

He had, however, the satisfaction daily to receive increasing testimonies, both from his countrymen and distinguished and grateful

foreigners, of the utility of his exertions, and the lights which he had thrown on the English language.

When the Duke de Bouillon visited England, he sought the acquaintance of Mr. Sheridan. The illustrious foreigner spoke English with perfect facility, and an excellent accent, which he attributed solely to the study of Mr. Sheridan's works. By the French writers of his day, he was termed "*Homme célèbre dans la République des Lettres.*" In Italy, his mode of writing words as pronounced, has been followed in the formation of a Dictionary of the Italian language. With what justice then can the elder Mr. Sheridan's claims be styled "empirical pretensions?"* with what justice can he be termed a man "of no authority in the world of letters?"† a man whose mode of instruction in oratory would, if followed, "clear the room."‡

The best refutation of this last aspersion is,

* Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan.

† Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan.

‡ Dr. Johnson was the original author of this last sarcasm.

to name the orator who was wholly formed on Mr. Sheridan's principles—his son, the late Right Honourable R. B. Sheridan. No one can feel for the mental powers of Dr. Johnson greater respect, greater admiration, than the writer of this defence; for his glowing eloquence, his pure morality, his profound insight into human nature, and his critical judgment in literature—but his fame is too great to be increased by the ruin of a rival. Let each have his proper degree of praise, and let their claims be adjudged by the voice of impartiality. Equally labourers in the cause of utility and virtue, the written language was Johnson's principal study, the spoken language the study of Sheridan. Johnson chiefly aimed at instructing men—Sheridan, at forming the habits of youth. Grant that Sheridan was enthusiastic in his pursuit of this favourite object, and in his ideas of the benefits that were to accrue from it—is not enthusiasm the soul of every human pursuit, without which it would be impossible to toil against disgust, and difficulty, and danger?

"There is an enthusiasm of the head, and that is genius; there is an enthusiasm of the heart, and that is virtue. There is also an enthusiasm of the temper."*

Of the two first species, the elder Mr. Sheridan had a considerable share; nor was he without a portion of the latter. And it was rewarded, although not exactly in the way to which his sanguine wishes pointed. His ideas on education have gradually spread, and have been adopted in this country by all those who have either written for youth, or introduced new improvements in education. His plans, for which the times were unripe, have influenced every amelioration that has been since introduced in the early and difficult approach to learning. His simple, yet nervous eloquence, like a fertilizing stream, has enriched the minds of those who tasted it, with pure draughts of knowledge and literature, and with views the most liberal and praiseworthy: and (to quote a phrase applied on a former occasion), in all the modern works in which learning has been cleared of its

* Edgeworth.

thorns and difficulties, in which language has been placed in its clearest and most beautiful light, and the parental task of education simplified, the praise must be adjudged, in the first instance, to him in whom such ideas all originated; and their authors must gratefully acknowledge that "Sheridan rang the bell."*

* "*La multiplicité des satires,*" says Madame Genlis, "a *produit le besoin des panégyriques.*"

No one can feel more than the author of this note the apparent aukwardness of eulogizing near relatives; but when an unjust and unfair attack has been made on the character of an individual, it is but fair to adduce the testimonials that can be produced on the other side in his favour. Mr. Thomas Sheridan has been represented as an enemy to universities, yet he received academical degrees from both of them. As despising scholarship, yet his classical attainments were respected by such men as Dr. Markham, Dr. Parr, and Dr Sumner of Harrow. The veneration of Mr. Thomas Sheridan for "The great Ancients," was so high, as to be the subject in his family of good-humoured raillery. His desire was to give his son Richard the best possible classical education, and he even wished to extend the knowledge of the Latin language to his daughters. The whole foundation on which the report of his contempt of University learning rests, is,—he asserted, both in his works and conversation, that in acquiring

quiring the dead languages, the living and native tongue should not be wholly neglected. How did the Greeks and Romans themselves arrive to such a height of fame in poetry and eloquence? was it by devoting their whole time to foreign tongues? to the cultivation of the Hebrew, the Egyptian, and the Chaldee? No; it was by incessantly studying and polishing their *own*. "*Imitate* the Antients," was Mr. Sheridan's principle, while he was supposed to have said "Neglect them." His other principle was an assertion (never disproved), that the English language contains in itself all the sources of harmony in poetic numbers, though by *means* different from those possessed by the Latin.* He said that it was unnecessary young people, not intended for the learned professions, should devote so much time to the learned languages; an idea that has been since expanded by Mr. Edgeworth. He said, that a mode of education suited to the particular destinations of youth, would be desirable; and *since* that time there have arisen separate modes—for military, commercial, and even agricultural education. If Mr. Sheridan could have foreseen the innumerable improvements introduced in modern times, he would have acknowledged his most sanguine wishes gratified: and if he had himself lived in these days, he would have probably seen no necessity for writing upon the subject of British Education.

* That such is the case in all modern languages except the French, is an opinion confirmed by M. Sismondi.—*Literature of the South*, vol. i. p. 109.

CHAPTER XII.

Anecdotes of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his family.—Contradiction of a statement in Dr. Watkins's Memoirs.—Lady Margaret Fordyce the real heroine of "The Picture Varnished."—Miss Linley becomes Mrs. Elizabeth Sheridan.—The biographer of R. B. Sheridan misinformed respecting her.—The Royal Concert.—The Duenna.—Anecdote of Barry the Actor.—Examination into the mysterious reports circulated relative to the real author of the School for Scandal.—History of the School for Scandal.—Morality of the piece.—Contradiction of several mis-statements respecting the Linley Family.—Affecting death of Miss Maria Linley.—Contradiction of the statement relating to Mrs. Elizabeth Sheridan's death.—Interesting particulars of the late R. B. Sheridan.—Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan.—Conclusion.

It now only remains to examine some passages relating to the late Right Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan himself.

The first is a literary mistake. It is observed in the "Memoirs," p. 182, 183.

"When the breathings of affection are ex-

pressed in harmonious numbers, and clothed with the richness of metaphor, they are certain of giving pleasure to the female object of adoration. Even the extravagance of hyperbolical adulation, and the absurdity of allegorical comparison, will, in such cases, be received as pure incense, of which these lines descriptive of the personal charms of Miss Linley afford a striking evidence:

"Mark'd you her eye, &c."

Now it so happens that the lines by R. B. Sheridan, beginning, "Mark'd you her eye," were written in praise, not of Miss Linley, but of Lady Margaret Fordyce, sister of Lady Anne Lindsay, the charming author of "Auld Robin Gray," and at that time the reigning belle of Bath. An anonymous poem, entitled, "The Bath Picture," had appeared, containing a description of the principal beauties then admired at that fashionable watering-place. When the bard arrived at the name of Lady Margaret Fordyce, he could only afford her the following moderate praise:

"Remark too the dimpling sweet smile
Lady Margaret's fair countenance wears."

Mr. Sheridan, who was often of Lady Margaret's parties, and felt for her the enthusiastic admiration of a young poet, seized the pen, and in an answer to "The Bath Picture," entitled, "Clio's Protest, or The Picture Varnished," after several pretty severe strictures on other parts of the poem, thus castigates the anonymous bard for his insensibility, and vindicates the lady's transcendant charms:

"But hark! did not our bard repeat
The love-born name of Margaret?
Attention seizes every ear;
We pant for the *description* here.
If ever dulness left thy brow,
Pindar, we say, 'twill leave thee now.
But oh! old Dulness' son anointed,
His mother never disappointed;
For after all we're left to seek
A *dimple* in Fordyce's cheek.
And could you really discover,
In gazing those sweet beauties over,
No other charm, no winning grace,
Adorning either mind or face,

But one poor dimple to express
The quintessence of loveliness.
Mark'd you her eye of sparkling blue?
Mark'd you her cheek of rosy hue?
That eye in liquid circles moving;
That cheek abash'd at man's approving;
The one, Love's arrows darting round,
The other blushing for the wound;
Did she not speak, did she not move,
Now Pallas, now the Queen of Love!"

The reader of taste will perceive a great beauty in the sudden change of accent in the line beginning, "Mark'd you her eye," which actually gives the impression that the poet had struck into a new measure, although the poem is throughout in eight syllable verse.

The last eight lines were set to music, and became deservedly popular. They breathe the very soul and spirit of beauty, and flow with a force and fire which proves how successfully Mr. Sheridan might have devoted himself to poetry, had not higher cares entirely absorbed his attention.

I shall not offer any more poetical extracts, not to trench upon the claims of another publication; but *this one* was necessary to show, that if the Biographer of Mr. Sheridan had read but a few lines more, he could never have made the mistake of applying these verses to Mrs. Sheridan, as he would have seen both the name of "Margaret" and of "Fordyce" inserted. As for the rest of the paragraph, granting the assertion upon which it is grounded to have been correct, the expression, "the extravagance of hyperbolical adulation," is misplaced: because, however inapplicable to Mrs. Sheridan's *peculiar* style of beauty the praise contained in the above lines might be, her claim to universal admiration, not only for personal charms, but for talent, taste, judgment, and excellence of disposition, placed her so high in the opinion of all who knew her, as to make it much more difficult to find expressions adequate to her merit, than to risk falling into enthusiastic praise.

The next passage I shall proceed to notice, occurs in pages 193-4-5, in which the long-contested question is debated, whether Mr. Sheridan should have let his wife sing in public or not? a question in which the biographer considering him as "a man possessing neither pedigree nor property," p. 195, throws his weight into the scale in favour of the measure. I know that nothing is so likely to excite the ridicule of the superficial, as an attempt to vindicate family pretensions: yet, at the hazard of encountering it, I must repel the first part of this unfounded assertion. If an unbroken descent from a family of equal antiquity and respectability in Ireland; a family which made its rare boast that none of its descendants of either sex had ever transgressed the laws of honour, and which, though at the beginning of the last century it no longer possessed the large estates that the ancient geographers of the kingdom assigned to the Sheridans, yet never fell from its rank among the respectable gentry of the county of Cavan—If this does not

constitute a "pedigree" honourable, though not ennobled, I am unacquainted with the meaning of the term.

The learned and conscientious prelate William Sheridan, Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh, who held that united see in the reign of Charles the Second, and was deprived for refusing to take the oaths at the Revolution, was not, as Dr. Watkins supposes (p. 2), a distant relation of the Sheridan family. The grandfather of Dr. Thomas Sheridan was younger brother of the Bishop of Kilmore. Perhaps it was the beauty of the alliteration "Pedigree and Property" in the preceding paragraph, that tempted the biographer, who thus continues:

"He carried his high notions so far, *as to prevent his wife* from singing at a royal concert, alleging that such an exhibition would degrade his character as a gentleman."—P. 193.

This is an unfortunate mistake. The biographer had heard *something about* a royal concert, but totally mistook the circumstances. The fact was, that Mr. R. B. Sheridan's ob-

jections were conquered in this one instance; and he unhesitatingly *gave his consent* that his wife should sing at the royal concert; the elevated character of that entertainment having obviated his former objections, Mrs. Sheridan was to have appeared there, when an unexpected change in the arrangements for the royal amusements, into which it is unnecessary to enter more particularly in this place, occasioned the idea to be given up.

Dr. Watkins goes on:

"It was observed, and justly, that Sheridan having no property of his own, *nor any calling by which he could maintain a family*, exerted an arbitrary authority in restraining his wife from following the occupation to which she had been bred, and by which she could not fail in a few years to realize a fortune."

Now Mr. Sheridan was at this time a member of the Middle Temple; and, had not more tempting (perhaps not more fortunate) prospects opened to his view, he had as fair a promise of advancement in his profession as the

most brilliant and astonishing talents could afford. His wife also was in no immediate distress; as the most highly gifted of his daughters, she was always distinguished by her father's favour, and had made enough by her professional exertions before marriage as to render the continuance of them unnecessary. But Dr. Watkins thinks they owed their existence at that time to the Magazines.

"But he still continued inflexible, though it was with great difficulty he could raise the necessary supplies, *and that by very equivocal means.* One of his resources was that of writing for the fugitive publications of the day, in which he was materially assisted by his wife.

"He has been heard to say, 'Mrs. Sheridan and myself were often obliged to keep writing for our daily leg or shoulder of mutton, otherwise we should have had no dinner.' One of his friends to whom he confessed this, wittily replied, 'Then I perceive it was a *joint concern.*'"

At the hazard of demolishing a story so

facetious, we must take leave to assure the biographer, that wherever he picked up that Joe Miller, it can bear no reference to Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan. Highly gifted and accomplished as was the latter, she never aspired to the honours of authorship; and the very time fixed upon as the period of these obscure literary exertions was much passed by the young couple in different visits at the country houses of friends no less distinguished for virtue than for the high rank they held in society;—friends, who delighted in the extraordinary combination of merit and agreeable qualities that Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his beautiful wife displayed; but who would assuredly not have continued to value him if he had been the character here represented; providing, "*by very equivocal means*," for an inglorious existence.

Before we dismiss the subject of *music*, it is with pain that justice compels the notice of another instance of misrepresentation.

"Though he (R. B. Sheridan) continued to reject all the overtures that were made for the

public appearanceof his wife, he readily suffered her to have private concerts, if they could properly be so denominated, by which it was probable more was obtained than could have been received in the display of her skill and melody in places of general admission.

"*Thus the same thing was practised with a finer name;* for whatever distinction an air of fashion might have given to these concerts, *the subscription by which they were supported was in reality the price given for an entertainment.* The income thus obtained at London and Bath was very handsome."—P. 196.

In all and every particular of this statement the biographer was misinformed. Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan gave some private concerts at their house in Orchard-street, Portman-square, as a return for the civilities and hospitality they received from many persons of fashion and consequence. A music-room was accidentally annexed to their house, and it was the least expensive entertainment they could give; the performers consisting entirely of Mrs. Sheri-

dan's family. Never, surely could the lovers of music have received a more exquisite gratification than that which was afforded on these occasions by the combined talents of Mrs. Sheridan, her father, her sisters, Mary and Maria, and her brother, Thomas Linley. But these concerts were, as I have already said, given as the discharge of a debt of civility already incurred. No money was ever received, nor were any such concerts given at Bath.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his wife certainly were in straitened circumstances, but he extricated himself by his own exertions. The comedy of "The Rivals," which met with great and deserved success, was succeeded by the opera of "The Duenna," which had a run never equalled in the annals of dramatic history but by that of the "Beggar's Opera." His profit was proportionably great, and the early display of such talent seemed to point out to him a never-failing resource.

Yet while "The Duenna" was in rehearsal at Covent Garden, Barry (then in his decline,)

expressed to the elder Mr. Sheridan his opinion that it would not succeed; and gave as his reason, "That there was too much *church music* in it;" by which singular expression he meant the slow and solemn airs, "Oft does Hymen," "O had my love," "Gentle Maid," "What Bard, O Time," and others.

The event shewed that Barry was no prophet; and two years afterwards, "The School for Scandal" placed Mr. Sheridan at the summit of theatrical celebrity. On this Dr. Watkins observes, some people were of opinion that the comedy "was not the performance of Sheridan; *by some it was attributed to the pen of Mrs. Sheridan.*"—P. 218.

With regard to Mrs. Sheridan's authorship, I have given a satisfactory answer in another place; but here comes a more alarming accusation.

"There were persons who roundly asserted *that the play was written by a young lady, the daughter of a merchant in Thames Street*; that at the beginning of the season, when Mr. Sheridan commenced his management, the MS. was

put into his hands for his judgment; soon after which the fair writer, who was then in a state of decline, went to Bristol Hot-wells, where she died.

"*Very observable* it is, that notwithstanding the general circulation of a charge, which, if true, must materially injure the moral and literary reputation of Sheridan, he never took the pains of repelling it, or of establishing his right to the brightest performance that bears his name."—P. 221. He never took the pains of repelling a report that his play was written by a *young* lady! The School for Scandal, by a *young lady, the daughter of a merchant in Thames Street!!!*

But lest it should be said that exclamation is not argument, and that one single fact is worth the most eloquent expressions of indignation, I will here briefly give the history of "The School for Scandal," upon the undoubted authority of the author's only surviving sister; and thus oppose to the groundless calumny that clear refutation which Mr. Sheridan through his life disdained to give.

Early introduced into the world, and placed in difficult and critical situations, Mr. R. B. Sheridan often saw his own name the sport of calumny, which, although it sometimes excited a smile, yet often gave rise to more painful feelings. At Bath, then famous for the manufacture and circulation of ungrounded stories, his duels and other romantic adventures were magnified and misrepresented in a thousand different ways. When he was recovering of his wounds, it was one of his amusements to read the daily accounts of himself in the papers and say, "Let me see what they report of me to-day; I wish to know whether I am dead or alive," &c. (The ridiculous and contradictory reports then afloat, certainly gave rise to the highly humourous duel scenes in "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal.") Other falsehoods sunk deeper into his heart; and having a mind turned to reflection, although his spirits were often led away by gaiety, the young poet conceived the noble plan of attacking the "Hydra, scandal, in his den," and exposing, in a spirited picture, the wide

extended mischief that may ensue from the encouragement of a censorious spirit.

His sister, who was with him when these ideas were first working in his mind, had the opportunity of watching his thoughts as they arose, while yet they were

"Like diamonds in their infant dew."

His biographer says,—

"The moral tendency of "The School for Scandal," is the part upon which its greatest admirers will find it difficult to say any thing conclusive or satisfactory."

Certainly, those who seek for morality in the character of Charles Surface, will be disappointed, but if they look for the moral tendency of "The School for Scandal" in the proper place, it will be found to be excellent. In Mr. Sheridan's play the faulty character of the piece is one common to the drama, though rendered partly original by the spirit, generosity and feeling, which the writer added from himself. The moral portion, on the contrary, is his own, and

is conceived in a manner equally just, pointed, and forcible. It consists in a lively exposure of the effects of a baneful propensity, in which many scruple not to indulge, who would shrink from the imputation of any other failing,—a propensity to slander and detraction. It points out to decided, though not to equal abhorrence, the dark and insidious plotter against reputation, the feeble and deceitful defender, the bitter and malignant censurer, and the good-humoured but thoughtless retailer of the envenomed lie. *These* are chastised, perhaps reformed, by the characters of Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Lady Teazle; and are taught to fear at least the shafts of ridicule, when to their hardened minds the moralist or the preacher might address themselves in vain.

For what I have further to say upon the subject I shall avail myself of his sister's * own words, without whose sanction my remarks could have no authority; and as the suspicions thrown out about "The School for Scandal"

* Mrs. Lefanu.

have perhaps had some effect, it is trusted the answer will be read with candour and attention.

"The whole story of the supposed manner in which the play of The School for Scandal came into Mr. Sheridan's hands is perfectly groundless, the writer of these lines having frequently heard him speak on the subject long before the play appeared; many of the characters and incidents related to persons known to them both, and were laughingly talked over with his family."

It is particularly remembered that, in the first sketch, the character which now bears the name of Mrs. Candour, went by that of Lady Kitty Candour: a title which, I presume, Mr. Sheridan abandoned on account of its too great resemblance to one in a dramatic piece of Foote's —Lady Kitty Crocodile; which was supposed to be meant for the Duchess of Kingston. Before he put pen to paper, the fable, as perfectly conceived and matured in his mind, was communicated to his friends; and the expression he made use of, described at once the completeness

and unity of his plan.—"The comedy is finished; *I have now nothing to do but to write it.*" This mode of composition is probably the only one in which the author can hope to give to his works the impression of energy and correctness.

The biographer continues:

"It certainly is *not a little extraordinary*, that while the other dramatic pieces of Mr. Sheridan have been committed to the press by his authority, and for his emolument, that which exceeds them all, and has brought most honour to his name, still remains unpublished," &c.—P. 218.

"When such stories were afloat, *the obvious course* pointed out by prudence and justice, was that of publishing the play."—P. 220.

"This was not done, and the seclusion of the piece within the walls of the theatre, together with a total forbearance of all explanation on the part of the manager, served to strengthen the suspicion that, *however embellished* the tale might be, it was not altogether fiction."—P. 221.

In making these remarks, the biographer seems to have forgot the nature of theatrical

literary property, or he would have perceived it was *not at all extraordinary* that the "School for Scandal" should not have been published till the period of literary property was expired. *It was not published, because* Mr. Sheridan chose to confine the performance of the play in London to his own theatre. Once a play is printed, such a monopoly can no longer be enjoyed. If he therefore wished to profit by the fruits of his own labours, it was by no means to be expected of "Prudence," that she should point it out as his *obvious course* to print his play, and thereby give Mr. Harris, of Covent Garden, an equal right to have it performed at his theatre.* "The Duenna," on the contrary, was not printed

* When the lapse of time gave to Covent Garden and other theatres the right of representing "The School for Scandal," Mr. Sheridan had thoughts of publishing it along with his other plays, to which he meant to have prefixed prefaces: and it is certainly to be regretted that his various avocations prevented the execution of this plan, which would probably have presented the public with a valuable body of dramatic criticism.

because the copyright was disposed of to Mr. Harris at the time it appeared. The Comedy of "The Rivals," was published during the run of the play. As Dr. Watkins is very fond of quoting the opinion of Dr. Johnson, whenever his opinion is inimical to the Sheridan family, we beg leave to remind him that Johnson, in recommending R. B. Sheridan for a member of the Literary Club, mentioned him particularly as the author of the best modern Comedy; without deigning to make the least reference to the absurd and ridiculous calumnies *said* to be even then already in circulation.

That Mr. Sheridan should have stopped just as his muse gave so rich a promise, must have been regretted by many, as well as by the noble bard who so elegantly eulogized his memory, and who thus apostrophized him while living;

> "Oh, SHERIDAN! if aught can move thy pen,
> Let Comedy resume her throne again;
> Give, as thy last memorial to the age,
> One classic drama, and reform the stage

But, from a different cause, complete success

sometimes produces the same effect as discouragement, in preventing an author from venturing again. Mrs. Inchbald, in her "Remarks" upon the different reception of Gay's "Beggars' Opera," and "Polly," observes, that an unsuccessful author ought to continue to write, and may perhaps write himself into reputation; but, that a perfectly successful one had better lay down his pen, lest a sudden blight should fall upon his laurels. It may be further observed, that from this time forward, Mr. Sheridan was thrown into the busy vortex of public life, and engaged in a distracting multiplicity of affairs, such as has perhaps seldom fallen to the lot of one individual. The time necessary for polishing and bringing works of fancy to perfection was absolutely denied him: and a laudable jealousy of his literary reputation may be allowed in the man, who, not long after his death, was concisely, but aptly characterized by an eminent living tragedian, as having "written the best comedy that ever was acted,

and spoken the best speech that ever was spoken."

Before I dismiss the subject of the drama, I must notice the biographer's conjecture :

" When it is considered Mr. Wallis was the confidential agent of Mr. Garrick, and that Mr. Ford stood on terms of the greatest intimacy with him, some foundation is afforded to substantiate what was said at the time, that Mr. Sheridan was indebted to the generosity of his friend and predecessor, Garrick, for the interest which he obtained in the concern of Drury Lane." &c. To which it is only necessary to answer, that there is *no foundation* for the assertion. Neither Mr. Sheridan nor his father ever had the least pecuniary obligation to Garrick whatsoever.

Equally erroneous are the statements respecting the Linley family.

" In *quick succession* she (Mrs. Sheridan) lost two accomplished brothers."—P. 316.

Further on, it is said :

"Thomas, the celebrated composer and performer on the violin, *was carried off in a few days by a raging fever.* Another fine youth, named Samuel, *was accidentally drowned in a pond.* Maria, who had been the delight of the lovers of harmony by her extraordinary vocal powers, expired *at the harpsichord*, while singing the praises of her Redeemer.

"The remembrance of his unmarried daughter (Maria), whose musical talents were the theme of universal admiration, never failed (with Mr. Linley) to open the bleeding wounds inflicted *by the awful manner of her dissolution.*"

"Mr. Linley, in fact, never recovered from the effects of this last heavy blow (the death of Mrs. Sheridan); which hurried him to the grave, leaving a widow and *one son* to lament," &c.—*Memoirs of the public and private Life of the Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan.*

In these three paragraphs there are four misstatements. It was Mr. Thomas Linley, Mrs. Sheridan's eldest brother (and *not* Samuel, as stated in the "Memoirs") who was unfortu-

nately drowned, while amusing himself in a pleasure boat, at the seat of the Duke of Ancaster, in the year 1778. He was *one* year younger than Mrs. Sheridan (not *seven years*, as stated in the Memoirs, P. 128). Mr. Thomas Linley was a young man of great merit, and uncommon musical abilities. A *few years afterwards*, his younger brother, Samuel, a lieutenant in the navy, was cut off by a fever. In the year 1785, Miss Maria Linley died at Bath, of a fever. So that it appears, between the death of Thomas and Maria Linley, there was an interval of *seven* years; a space of time which hardly justifies the expression in the "Memoirs," (P. 316) that Mrs. Sheridan had "*scarcely* poured forth her sorrows" over the untimely graves of her brothers, "before she was called upon to lament the death of her favourite sister, who expired at Bath on the fifth of September 1784, while singing Handel's exquisite and soul-enlivening anthem, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'"

The extraordinary story of Miss Maria Lin-

ley's "expiring at the harpsichord," is not correct. She died, as has been already stated, of a fever; and was attended by Dr. Harrington, a gentleman no less celebrated for his medical skill than for his musical abilities. A little time previous to her death, when confined to her bed, she raised herself up, and with unexpected and momentary animation sung a part of the anthem, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The female attendant, who related the scene to Mrs. H. Lefanu (the mother of the writer), described it as the most affecting she had ever witnessed. The pathetic, and almost super-human sweetness of the notes breathed by the young and lovely creature, who was just departing from them, and the awful hope inculcated in the words of the air she had chosen, contributed to give an appearance of inspiration to this last effort of a voice that had delighted every ear. Dr. Harrington was greatly overcome by the scene, and could only exclaim, "She is an angel!" as he left the room. Exhausted by the effort, she

sunk into the arms of her attendant, and shortly afterwards breathed her last.

In the year 1787, Mrs. Sheridan experienced a still greater affliction in the death of Mrs. Tickell, the sister nearest to her in age, and the chosen friend of her heart.

The mention of Mrs. Tickell naturally leads to the notice of a ludicrous mistake, though one of small importance, that occurs in Dr. Watkins's "Memoirs," on the subject of Mr. Tickell's second marriage.

"Not long after the death of his first wife, Mr. Tickell married Miss Leigh, *who is mentioned so respectfully in the preceding letter*, and who deserved his esteem by her accomplishments and virtues. She was the daughter of a Commander in the Marine Service of the East-India Company."

Here *two* very different ladies are manifestly blended into one: for the lady "so respectfully mentioned in the letter," was Miss Sophia Lee, of Belvedere House, Bath, author of "Canter-

bury Tales," &c. under whose care Miss Tickell was placed, and who never was married. The beautiful Miss Leigh, whom Mr. Tickell took for his second wife, as the reader will observe, spelt her name differently.

The statement respecting Mr. Linley's surviving family is not more correct than the preceding one. He left *three* children; two sons, William Linley, Esq., the Rev. Ozias Linley, and a daughter, Jane, afterwards married to the late Charles Ward, Esq., Secretary to the Committee of Management of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

The following mis-statement, however, is an error of greater magnitude; and as it materially affects the late Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan, the writer will be excused for dwelling more at length upon it, than on the preceding. It relates to the death of the first Mrs. Sheridan, at Bristol.

"One morning, when Mrs. Sheridan was about to take an airing on the neighbouring downs, she found that the carriage and horses

had just been taken in execution by an unfeeling creditor. It may naturally be supposed that a shock so sudden and rude would operate with deadly effect upon a frame already enfeebled beyond the power of recovery, and hanging as it were by an imperceptible thread over the margin of the grave. The stroke, indeed, acted with similar violence to the wintry blast upon a tender plant; for the sufferer, bending before it, burst into tears, and retired into her chamber, out of which she never came again till the lifeless form was conveyed to the silent mansion, "*where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.*"—(*Memoirs of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.*)

It is not clear *who* is meant by the concluding quotation in the text, but the biographer may rest assured, that, through whatever channel he obtained the anecdote of the carriage being stopped, it is quite an invention. Had such a circumstance taken place, Mrs. Sheridan was surrounded by tender and watchful friends, who never would have exposed her

to the *chance* of such a shock. The fact was, she was with great difficulty conveyed to Bristol, and never regained strength to bear the motion of a carriage. She ventured a few times to the Wells in a sedan chair, her husband walking beside her. Indeed, the affection and solicitude he shewed during the whole time of her illness, was such as could not be surpassed.

A lady of the highest respectability, whose friendship for Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his wife was of twenty years' standing, and who was with Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan at the time of her decease, thus wrote to Mrs. H. Lefanu, who was in Ireland, and most anxious to know every particular respecting a friend so dear.

"..... The truth is, our poor friend is in a most precarious state of health, and quite given over by the faculty. Her physician here, who is esteemed very skilful in consumptive cases, assured me from the first it was a *lost case ;* but as your brother seemed unwilling to know the truth, he was not so explicit to him, and only represented her as

being in a very critical situation. Poor man! he cannot bear to think her in danger himself, or that any one else should, though he is as attentive and watchful as if he expected every moment to be her last. It is impossible for any man to behave with greater tenderness, or to feel more on such an occasion than he does."

If these expressions do not contradict the charge of thoughtless unkindness on Mr. Sheridan's part, which must be inferred from the anecdote in the text, I know of none sufficiently strong to answer that purpose. The description of Mrs. Sheridan's death-bed scene is still more striking.

"Our dear departed friend kept her bed only two days, and seemed to suffer less during that interval than for some time before. She was perfectly in her senses to the last moment, and talked with the greatest composure of her approaching dissolution, assuring us all that she had the most perfect confidence in the mercies of an All-powerful and merciful Being, from

whom alone she could have derived the inward comfort and support she felt at that awful moment. She said she had no fear of death, and that all her concern arose from the thoughts of leaving so many dear and tender ties, and of what they would suffer for her loss!—Her own family were at Bath, and had spent one day with her when she was tolerably well. Your poor brother now thought it proper to send for them, and to flatter them no longer. They immediately came: it was the morning before she died. They were introduced one at a time, at her bed-side, and were prepared as much as possible for this sad scene. All our feelings were awakened for her poor father: the interview between him and the dear angel was affecting and heartbreaking to the greatest degree imaginable. I was afraid she would have sunk under the cruel agitation: she said it was indeed too much for her.

"She gave some kind injunctions to each of them, and said every thing she could to comfort them under this severe trial. They then parted,

in the hope of seeing her again in the evening; but they never saw her more! Mr. Sheridan and I sat up all that night with her. Indeed, he had done so for several before, and never left her for one moment that could be avoided. About four o'clock in the morning we perceived an alarming change, and sent for her physician. She said to him, 'If you can relieve me, do it quickly; if not, do not let me struggle, but give me some laudanum.' His answer was 'Then I will give some laudanum.' She desired to see Tom* and Betty Tickell† before she took it, of whom she took a most affecting leave. Your brother behaved most wonderfully, though his heart was breaking, and at times his feelings were so violent, that I

* Her son the late Thomas Sheridan.

† Miss Elizabeth Tickell, daughter of Richard Tickell, Esq., and Mrs. Sheridan's beloved sister, Mary Tickell. After Mrs. Tickell's death, Mrs. Sheridan had, with her husband's approbation, taken entire charge of her niece, whom she adopted, and who, after the death of that affectionate relation, was placed by Mr. Sheridan at Miss Lee's Seminary, in Bath.

feared he would have been quite ungovernable at the last; yet he summoned up resolution to kneel by her bed-side, until he felt the last struggle of expiring excellence, and then gently withdrew.

"She died at five o'clock in the morning, 28th of June 1792."

A few days after the funeral, Mr. Sheridan removed to a house he had at Isleworth, where he remained, "with no other companions but his two children," in whom his heart was at that time entirely wrapped up. The little girl whom Mrs. Sheridan had left in infancy, was represented by all who saw her to have possessed a surprising degree of beauty: she was in fact the miniature of her mother; but, as might be expected under the circumstances of her birth, small and delicate, and giving very little expectation of long life. This uncommon resemblance to her mother endeared the infant beyond expression to her afflicted parent, who could not bear her a moment out of his sight. He was dreadfully agitated on his arrival at

Isleworth, and though he constrained himself to appear cheerful in the presence of others, all his solitary hours were given up to the anguish of sorrow and regret; still, for the sake of his son Thomas, who behaved to his father with constant and tender attention, but whose young mind required a change from the constant contemplation of melancholy objects, Mr. Sheridan resolved to make an effort, and in the beginning of August after his irreparable loss, he entertained a few intimate friends on a visit of a week at Isleworth. The following is a description of his deportment.

"We never saw him do the honour of his house before; that, you know, he always left to that dear, elegant creature, who never failed to please and charm every one who ever came within the sphere of her notice. Nobody could have filled her place so well; he seemed to have pleasure in making much of those whom she loved, and who, he knew, sincerely loved her. We all thought he never appeared to so much advantage. He was attentive to every body

and every thing, though grave and thoughtful; and his feelings, poor fellow, often ready to break forth in spite of his efforts to suppress them. He spent his evenings mostly by himself."

Towards the end of October Mr. Sheridan took a house at Wanstead. He had his son Thomas there with his tutor, Mr. Smyth, and had removed his nursery to it about a year, when, at a little evening entertainment, given chiefly to the young friends of his son, his feelings were destined to be shocked by the most dreadful domestic misfortune that could befal him,—the death of his infant daughter Mary, of which the following is a circumstantial account.

"My dear Mrs. Lefanu,

"I fear you will reproach me for not having sooner informed you of your poor brother's having lost his dear little girl. She was suddenly snatched from us in convulsions, after a few hours' illness. The circumstances attend-

ing this melancholy event were particularly distressing: a large party of young people were assembled at your brother's, to spend a joyous evening in dancing: we were all in the height of our merriment; he himself remarkably cheerful, and partaking of the amusement, when the alarm was given that the dear little angel was dying! It is impossible to describe the confusion and horror of the scene. He was quite frantic, and I knew not what to do. Happily there were present several kind, good natured men, who had their recollection, and pointed out what should be done; Mr. Morris was present, and made himself very useful.* We very soon had every possible assistance, and for a short time we had some hope that her precious life would have been spared to us, but that was soon at an end."

* The late Edward Morris, Esq. M.P., youngest son of the late Dr. Morris, and brother of Charles Morris, Esq., of Southampton, and of George Paulet Morris, M.D. The late Edward Morris, Esq. died a Master in Chancery.

After a detailed account of the illness and death of the infant, the amiable writer continues:

"The dear babe's resemblance to her beloved mother after her death, was so much more striking that it was impossible to see her without recalling every circumstance of that afflicting scene; and he (Mr. Sheridan) was continually in the room, indulging the sad remembrance. In this manner he indulged his feelings for four or five days; then, having indispensable business, he was obliged to go to London, from whence he returned on Sunday, apparently in good spirits, and as well as usual. But however he may assume the appearance of ease and cheerfulness, his heart is not of a nature to be quickly reconciled to the loss of any thing he loves. He suffers deeply and secretly, and I dare say he will long and bitterly lament both mother and child."

These few extracts may prove interesting, as putting the character of the late Richard Brinsley Sheridan in a new and just point of view. It remains now only to notice a few particulars

erroneously stated in his biography, relative to his elder brother the late Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan, p. 463. He is said to have been "in principle quite the reverse of his brother, who never lived with him on good terms."

This is not correct. Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan was by no means the reverse of his brother in political principles, though from his early connexions he generally acted with government. Neither is it at all true that the brothers were not on good terms; as it was during the short-lived Rockingham Administration, in which Richard Brinsley Sheridan was under Secretary of State, that he obtained for his brother the place of Secretary at War, (*not* under Secretary of State for the War department, as mentioned by Dr. Watkins,) in Ireland. The residence of the brothers in different kingdoms prevented their intercourse from being frequent; but when Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan visited England, a short time before his death, the intercourse between him and his brother was perfectly friendly and cor-

dial. Their opinions in many points coincided; for the talents of Charles Francis Sheridan were great as well as those of his brother. He was originally intended for the diplomatic line, in which it was a pity he did not continue, as no man was more formed by nature and education for success in it; possessing as he did the French language, (the universal language of courts,) in its utmost elegance and perfection, to which he joined an engaging suavity of manners, totally divested of the usual self-importance of office. On his return from Sweden, where at the early age of twenty he enjoyed the confidential situation of Secretary to the British Embassy, Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan wrote an account of the celebrated revolution, for which he was furnished with the most ample and valuable materials by the Ambassador, Sir John Goodricke himself. Of the eagerness with which this work was received, Boswell gives the following amusing account. "At Mr. Dilly's to-day, were Mrs. Knowles, (the ingenious qua-

ker lady,) Miss Seward, the Rev. Dr. Mayo, and the Rev. Mr. Beresford. Before dinner Dr. Johnson seized upon Mr. Charles Sheridan's 'Account of the late Revolution in Sweden,' and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying. 'He knows how to read better than any one,' said Mrs. Knowles; 'he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it.' He kept it wrapt up in the tablecloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness when he should have finished another: resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him."

After his return from Sweden, Mr. Charles Francis Sheridan was entered a student at the Temple, and was called to the Bar in Ireland about the year 1779. A violent fever that endangered his life, and left great remains of

weakness, induced him to give up the active part of the profession; and he studied that branch of the law called special pleading. His appointment of Secretary at War in Ireland, obliged him to give up this respectable and lucrative branch of the law. Charles Francis Sheridan was member of Parliament for the borough of Belturbet, county of Cavan; and (from his office) a Privy Counsellor. Besides the History of the Revolution of Sweden, he was the author of a very celebrated tract upon Poyning's Law, and of several other valuable legal pamphlets. At his death he left a widow very amply provided for, three daughters, and two sons. In the Memoirs of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan it is erroneously stated that they both "died in the East, where they filled situations of trust," &c.—P. 463. Charles, the eldest, held a place under government in Ireland, and died in that country a few years after his father. Thomas, the youngest son, was sent to India as a writer; he was a young man of merit in every respect,

and high in the esteem of his superiors, when he was carried off by a fever at Shiraz, in Persia, a short time after his going abroad.

Richard, the son of the elder Mr. T. Sheridan's brother, a barrister of high reputation, and King's counsel, represented the borough of Charlemont, in Ireland, having been called to that situation of trust by the late excellent Earl of Charlemont, solely in consequence of the high esteem that nobleman entertained for his character.*

With respect to the elucidations in justification of certain passages of the late Richard Brinsley Sheridan's private life, I do not pretend to give any thing from myself, but write them as furnished to me from documents of the highest authority and respectability. They will not be deemed impertinent or misplaced, when his near relationship is considered to the amiable woman whose life forms the chief subject of these Memoirs: a woman whose time was devoted to the duties of domestic life, and the

* See Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, Vol. ii. p. 318.

education of her children; a mother, whose distinguished talents and fond endearments were remembered and regretted by Mr. Sheridan, even in the meridian of his own fame and distinction; and who, could she look down from the place which we humbly trust her well-spent life must assign her, could not be supposed to consider the highest worldly success as a compensation for her son's having deservedly incurred the charge of neglecting every virtue.

THE END.

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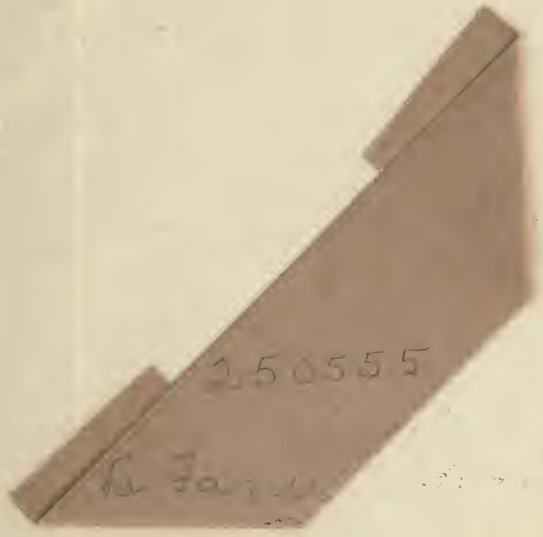
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